

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

IN

JOHN CALVIN.

by

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Prefatory Note.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the significance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit for John Calvin and for the understanding of his thought and life. The thesis is divided into three parts. The first part - the main body of the work - deals with Calvin's doctrine of the Nature and Work of the Holy Spirit; the second, the relation of his doctrine to subsequent developments, notably in Puritanism and Quakerism; and in the third, an estimate is made of the relation of the doctrine to Calvin's own experience. In the Conclusion, suggestions are made as to the significance of his doctrine of the Spirit for the present day. A synopsis of the whole work is appended. This is followed by a Bibliography.

The quotations from Calvin are mainly from translations of his works, although certain references are made direct to the indispensable Corpus Reformationum or Opera (cited as C.R.; Opera.) Those from his Institutio are taken mainly from Beveridge's translation - Institutes of the Christian Religion - (with which occasional liberties have been taken). These are usually referred to by three sets of figures, e.g. IV.2.5. - Book IV, Chapter 2, Section 5, and are given in the text rather than as foot-notes. The most frequent references in the foot-notes are to his Commentaries - e.g. C; Gal. 2.20. The letters cited are as numbered by Jules Bonnet in his collection.

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THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN JOHN CALVIN.

INTRODUCTION.

All spiritual truths and realities ultimately defy exhaustive intellectual articulation. The human mind from the outset is vitiated by its finitude whenever it seeks to understand and explain Divine verities. Moreover the very position which the theologian occupies as a 'scientist' tends to make him stand over the data, the nature and significance of which he is concerned to discover. In this capacity he is often imperceptibly drawn away from the vital and salutary realisation that he is confronted, not with facts that lie beneath him, awaiting his cataloguing activities, but rather by the Living God, who, if He is to be known at all, is to be known not as object but as Subject.

The attempted objectification of many doctrines of the Christian Faith may not in all cases have proved unsuccessful and unprofitable. Indeed it is incumbent upon us relatively to objectify the factual elements of the Christian Revelation, but we should not be surprised if we find that something has escaped us during the process. We must be alive to this danger especially in our treatment of the Holy Spirit. We might well observe Emerson's dictum - "If I speak, I define and confine and am less". The mesh of our definitions and our systems lets slip the truths of the Spirit who might be described as "The Eternal Evanescence" - the "Will o' the wisp" of theology. The Spirit is certainly like

the wind which "bloweth where it listeth", and positively refuses to be mechanised. Although the scriptural revelation is permeated by the Spirit, and although any worthy system of theology should be similarly characterised, to try to put one's measuring rod over the Spirit tends to a sense of intellectual impotence, not to say spiritual frustration. To change the metaphor; the Heavenly Dove finds no easy place to rest on the flood-waters of theology. It will be for us to decide how far Calvin has succeeded in capturing the 'spirit of the Spirit' - how far the Spirit has captivated his spirit.

To attempt to give a systematic exposition of any man's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is to embark on a very ambitious project, since to do so fully virtually means that every aspect of theology has to be touched upon. In addition to this, as Dr. Wheeler Robinson points out, excursions should be made into the fields of science and art, life and literature, history and philosophy, as well as psychology and even the world of the New Testament - the Sitz im Leben of the revelation of the Spirit. The man's doctrine should be read in the light of findings in these spheres, meanwhile observing whether there are any traits, in his presentation, of the heresies that have arisen in connection with conceptions of the Spirit, and whether his beliefs contribute to the weal or woe of the Spirit-dependent Church.

In our treatment of Calvin's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, however, our approach will be prescribed by his theological (rather than philosophical or psychological) emphasis.

Moreover, we shall not seek to give an elaborate account of his teaching where he is in complete agreement with traditional orthodoxy, but we shall note any contributions peculiar to him. Thus, for instance, it is sufficient to show that, in the main, he is consonant with the Church in her doctrine of the Trinity, without discussing all the ramifications of that doctrine. Obviously, on the other hand, a fuller treatment is required of his teaching regarding the Holy Spirit's relation to the Scriptures, and to the Christian life, both in its individual and corporate aspects. Quite naturally, the first place to go to for his teaching is his monumental work - the "Institutes of the Christian Religion", and in particular to the Third Book; but his commentaries, tracts and sermons must be searched and his letters taken into account, especially insofar as they reveal that the Holy Spirit was not relegated to an academic niche, but entered into the warp and woof of his life.

We are certainly confronted with a difficulty in that Calvin is not in the habit, as it were, of wearing his heart on his sleeve. He indulges in very few soliloquies and seldom draws aside the veil to reveal the inner drama of his own spiritual life. The Puritans and Quakers of a later date admittedly expressed their experiences in a different and more subjective, autobiographical manner. Is it fair, however, to say that, because Calvin did not conform to their style of diction and openness, he knew nothing of their experiences - that he never entered into that universe of 'Spirit-Reality' with which they claim to be so familiar?

Are we to concur in the belief that the Holy Spirit to him was a mere deus ex machina, or an element essential up to a point to his theological system, and subsequently dispensable?

Is there really such a gulf between him and the Puritans and the Quakers? Can it not be that their indebtedness to him has not been sufficiently realised? Is it not the case that there were at least implicit, and, to a considerable degree explicit, in Calvin, 'the implications for their lives which they (the Puritans) believed the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to possess,' and also what eventually appeared as the issue between Puritans and Quakers? Did he not forestall innumerable other issues that have arisen even since their days, and attempt to offer no mean solution?

We shall have to ask whether to label Calvin as Kein Geistesmensch as is done by Dr. Nuttall, following Paul Wernle, and to say that to him "the Holy Spirit was a necessity of thought rather than a fact of experience" is to be grossly unfair to the Reformer. We shall see whether Wernle was not nearer the truth when, in describing Calvin, he says that "....a divine ardour possessed him. Concentrated, well-directed enthusiasm - that is his essence; it was himself first of all, whom he consumed in his zeal." Indeed we may find that our sympathies must lie much more with B.B. Warfield in his verdict that "....above all he (Calvin) gave to the Church the entire doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit, profoundly conceived and wrought out in its details, with its fruitful distinctions of common and efficacious grace, of noetic, aesthetic and thelematic

effects, - a gift, we venture to think, so great, so pregnant with benefit to the Church as fairly to give him a place by the side of Augustine, and Anselm, and Luther, as the Theologian of the Holy Spirit, as they were respectively the theologian of Grace, of the Atonement, and of Justification."

It is undeniable that a not inconsiderable body of writers have shone the spotlight of history upon the figure of "Servetus" as he featured in Calvin's life, and have focussed their light on "Predestination" as the Alpha and Omega of Calvin's teaching. He has thus been introduced to the ever credulous lay mind, as the austere, spiritless sadist in the sphere of thought and action. Is not this utterly to misunderstand him? We have to enquire whether this misconception does not take its rise from the fallacy of isolating incidents and doctrines, and more especially, from a failure to realise that, taken by and large, the Holy Spirit played a cardinal part in Calvin's own experience. We shall not be surprised to find that the Holy Spirit is integral to his entire theology, and that this fact alone when rightly appreciated, lends warmth and intimacy to what might otherwise be arid scholasticism.

It may or may not appear urgent to demonstrate that one who is long laid in an inconspicuous and 'anonymous' grave in Geneva was related in this way or that to the Holy Spirit. It does concern us, however, to know whether his message has a dynamic and inescapable relevance to a world that has traversed four centuries since his commanding voice became silent, and now seems to stand in an unprecedented spiritual impasse, secularly and religiously.

The present writer is a member of a Presbyterian Church which bears the name of "Calvinistic Methodist". The first part of this twofold title indicates the theological emphasis of the church, while the second originally referred to the spiritual fervour evidenced in Wesleyan Methodism (in addition to the 'society' methods employed). The suggestion is put forward that were the implications of Calvin's doctrine of the Holy Spirit fully realised and worked out in our experience, the term 'Methodism', as in reference to the "enthusiasm" displayed, would be redundant.

Nor is this of merely local or 'church' significance. These are days when, on the one hand, materialistic totalitarianism seems to be triumphantly on the march, and on the other hand, psychologists are taking the field against the essence of Christian experience and are resolving it into a naïve subjectivism. There is a crucial need to return to something in the nature of the comprehensive objectivity, finality and authority of Calvin's theology linked with, sustained and impelled by, his vigorous and invigorating conception of the Holy Spirit.

PART I.

CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT.

Chapter I.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE INNER LIFE OF GOD.

CHAPTER 1

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE INNER LIFE OF GOD

"Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." Such is the case with the most erudite of men as well as the mediocre and the ignoramus, and John Calvin, for all his striding the Reformation field like a Colossus, could not claim to be an exception. He, in company with lesser lights, stood as an inheritor of the rich deposit of the early Christian centuries, and although many of those gems had been hidden far from sight and had suffered grossly the impairing of their lustre, and challenged arduous excavation, not a few of them had remained fairly near the surface, and needed but the deft touch of the expert to elicit the radiance from their facets. To these latter belong the truths concerning the nature of the Holy Spirit as John Calvin found them. We shall have occasion to see that the case was quite other in regard to his findings on the work of the Spirit.

The Eternal One Who 'had not the Spirit by measure' gave His divine sanction to His followers to baptize in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. One of the greatest who underwent that baptism committed his spiritual offspring in Corinth to the 'grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost.' Ever since, there have been myriads who, in the

words of the "Apostles' Creed", (which at an early date, and by no clearly demarcated steps, assumed a prominent position), have uttered, with divers degrees of illumination - "I believe in the Holy Ghost."

Many no doubt naïvely made that confession whose conceptions of the Holy Spirit were decidedly nebulous. Nor was the Church blameless in the matter, for her spokesmen sounded no clear note. Binitarian tendencies were much in evidence and the Holy Spirit was identified promiscuously with the pre-existent Christ. Adumbrations of more correct thinking were found in Clement of Rome who, before the end of the first century, made use of a Trinitarian formula, as did Ignatius also. Montanism, despite its undue, unhealthy exaltation of the Paraclete, could proudly claim as one of its adherents the "fierce Tertullian" who brought his practical, legal, concrete type of mind to bear on theology, and, in particular, enunciated the classical Trinitarian formula tres Personae in una Substantia, drawing attention in a new way to the Personality of the Spirit as one of three in the Godhead. Neither he nor Origen, however, succeeded in laying low the spectre of Subordinationism. Origen was accused of allowing elements which later supported the view that it is by the agency of the Son that the Holy Spirit subsists, and that the Spirit is not clearly distinguishable from the first of created beings.

Monarchianism, in its avowedly sincere attempt to combat tendencies to Tritheism and to honour the unity of the Godhead fell into an insipid Modalism. It was the deliverance of Athanasius - that the Holy Spirit was ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ, and the Creed of Epiphanius (A.D.374), affirming the Personality and the Deity of the Spirit, that paved the way for the Nicaeanoconstantinopolitan Creed (A.D.381). This Creed routed the heresies of Arius (The Holy Spirit - a creature), Sabellius (The Holy Spirit - a mere mode of Deity with no distinct eternal Personality), and Macedonius(who put the Holy Spirit on a par only with the angels).

The Eastern Cappadocian Fathers with their unequivocal declaration that "the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three permanent and substantive modes of being existing within the unity of a single Divine οὐσία or essence"; Augustine in his architectonic work on the Trinity, although throwing the onus of his use of the word "Persons" on to the poverty of human speech in the face of the mystery of Deity; and, more especially, the "Athanasian" Creed - the Quicunque Vult - in its attacks on any vestiges of Subordinationism by saying "In this Trinity none is afore, or after other : none is greater, or less than another; but the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal": all these have the cumulative effect of establishing the nature of the Holy Spirit. To this there was no substantial or significant addition.

during the Middle Ages. It becomes evident, however, that the crystallising of doctrine had not resulted in an enhanced transparency of experience, but rather that the Spirit now brooded over stagnant waters which, when occasionally disturbed, did not become clearer. It took nothing less than the 'volcanic eruption' of the Reformation to effect a change.

It was the Holy Spirit Himself, of course, who was in operation, and the ever-increasing experiences of the Reformers of His presence and power, and the resulting host of practical problems which arose, might well have directed their thoughts away from discussions - and certainly from vain speculations - as to His Person. Indeed, Calvin was accused of being very nonchalant in his attitude to the ancient creeds and formularies in which the intricacies of the Trinity had been tabulated. But this was by no means the case. He makes this explicit in one of his letters (which itself, incidentally, contains an admirable confession of faith): "We believe in one God, of a simple essence, and yet, in which there are three distinct Persons, as we are taught in the Holy Scriptures, and as the doctrine has been laid down by ancient councils, and we detest all sects and heresies, which the ancient doctors have combatted."¹

Neither did Calvin gainsay this in his controversy with

1). Letter CCCCLXXX

Caroli. When he refused to sign the ancient creeds at the dictation of his opponent he gave four explicit reasons. First, he wished to safeguard his followers - especially those young in the faith - from being obliged to 'imbibe' 'empty' formulae whose truths were ~~very~~ inarticulate to them and beyond their grasp: his was a spiritual and practical contention. Secondly, he was unwilling to set a precedent by signing a traditional symbol brought forward by a mere 'disturber of the peace' whose progeny might be encouraged to follow suit. Thirdly, he could without hesitation cite profusely from his writings and his recognised theological treatises as well as his more informal letters - in order to testify to his orthodoxy. But, finally, and above all, he wished to show the ultimate redundancy of creeds when one has the very Word of God as the criterion for judgment, as he declares in the Confession of Lausanne, "We cannot seek God's majesty anywhere except in His Word; nor can we think anything about Him except with His Word, or say anything of Him except through His Word.... A religious confession is nothing but a witness to the faith which abides in us;....therefore it must be drawn only from the pure fountain of Scripture."

His whole treatment of the Holy Spirit, of the Trinity, as of every doctrine, shows his unwavering faithfulness and appeal to Scripture and his aversion to empty words and clichés. He does not pander to philosophical niceties and

theological abstractions framed in "bloodless categories" but wishes to set forth living truth and grapple with live errors. Baur's criticism could not apply to the way in which Calvin deals with the Holy Spirit, when he accuses the Reformer of not knowing "how to bring the doctrine (in particular the Trinity) itself out of its transcendental remoteness into closer relations with his religious and dogmatic consciousness."¹ He is nearer the mark when he says that Calvin gives a constitutive place in his idea of the Trinity to "the practical consciousness of the operations in which the Son and the Spirit make themselves known as the peculiar principles of the divine life," and that this, (according to Warfield)² was because it was to him "a postulate of his profoundest religious emotions." "The nerve of the doctrine was its implication in the experience of salvation, in the Christian's certainty that the Redeeming Christ and the Sanctifying Spirit are each Divine Persons." As early as 1537 Calvin, in his catechism shows the basis of his standpoint. "Scripture and pious experience itself show us in the absolutely simple essence of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."³

Dr. Hodgson in his Croall lectures⁴ maintains that Calvin took a definite step forward in expounding the content of the distinctions in the Godhead. "He is not content simply to refer to the relations of filiation and

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- 1). Baur F.C. Die christliche Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit iii, 1843. pp. 42-43.
 - 2). Warfield. Calvin and Calvinism p. 195
 - 3). Calvin Opp. XXI. 52.
 - 4). Hodgson Dr. The Doctrine of the Trinity. p. 168

procession. Although the Divine existence in three Persons is not to be confused with God's creative activity, yet it is through his self-manifestation in and to his creation that we find the evidence for our belief in His eternal threefoldness. Calvin, in fact....arrives at the doctrine of the Trinity by asking what must be the eternal nature of the God of this particular temporal manifestation."

We shall be careful, however, to point out that there are not implied here, or anywhere in Calvin, the traits of the later Schleiermacher; that to Calvin, the Holy Spirit and His place in the Trinity is not a matter of the projection of his own subjective experiences; the Holy Spirit is not merely forced upon him as a postulate concerning the "whence of our receptive and active existence" but is a "trans-subjective reality" of which the soul can lay hold.

Calvin found the Scriptures replete with data about the Holy Spirit, and he found that these were corroborated in the Church's experience. His dependence on the objective revelation of God is patent throughout his treatment of the Spirit, as is shown in his own comment on John 14.17.

"All that Scripture tells us about the Holy Spirit is regarded by earthly men as a dream; because trusting to their own reason, they despise heavenly illumination.

Now, though this pride abounds everywhere, which extinguishes, so far as lies in our power, the light of

the Holy Spirit; yet conscious of our own poverty, we ought to know, that whatever belongs to sound understanding proceeds from no other source. Yet Christ's words show that nothing which relates to the Holy Spirit can be learned by human reason, but that He is known only by the experience of faith." When we come to consider more particularly His teaching as to the Nature of the Holy Spirit, we find that he purposes to make clear three things.

1. That the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Father and the Son.
2. That He is essentially Deity.
3. That He is a Person.

In many of his arguments and quotations from Scripture he touches simultaneously on these three points; because naturally they are so linked together, and what demonstrates the one, often, just as readily, proves the other two. Calvin, of course, is concerned throughout to maintain the Unity of the Godhead, but he urges, (I.13.2) that God "points himself out by another special note also, (the other two being his immensity and spirituality) by which He may be more particularly defined: for He so predicates unity of Himself that He proposes Himself to be considered

distinctively in three Persons; and unless we hold to these there is nothing but a bare and empty name of God, by no means the true God, floating in our brain." He is compelled at the outset to bring in the idea of multiformity

and, more especially, of Tripersonality to vivify his conception of God.

Calvin has no great liking for the theological jargon of an oft too barren orthodoxy and the terms that had been bandied to and fro during the history of doctrine, and would like to avoid all the vagaries of technical discussion were people prepared to acquiesce simply in Scripture. "I wish indeed," he says, "that such names were buried, provided all would concur in the belief that the Father, Son and Spirit are one God, and yet that the Son is not the Father, nor the Spirit the Son, but that each has His peculiar subsistence." (I. 13.5)

In spite, however, of his aversion to the controversial terms he will not allow the orthodox position to be jeopardised by heretics who try to get away with their beliefs by hiding behind the contention that these terms are unscriptural, and he is thus prepared to employ ὑπόστασις προσώπων and the like.

(1) Having demonstrated the distinction between God the Father and God the Son, Calvin adduces the obvious scriptural references to the distinction between the Father and the Spirit, and between the Son and the Holy Spirit. "Christ intimates the distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Father, when He says that the Spirit proceedeth

from the Father, and between the Holy Spirit and Himself, when He speaks of Him as another, as He does when He declares that He will send another Comforter; and in many other passages besides, (John XIV.6; XV.26. 14.16) (I.13.17)¹ He further describes the distinction by saying "that to the Father is attributed the beginning of action, the fountain and source of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel and arrangement in action, while the energy and efficacy of action is assigned to the Spirit (I.13.18) In commenting on John XIV. 16 'And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever' Calvin says that Christ "calls the Spirit another Comforter on account of the difference between the blessings we obtain from both. "The peculiar office of Christ was to appease the wrath of God by atoning for the sins of the world, to redeem man from death, to procure righteousness and life; and the peculiar office of the Spirit is to make us partakers not only of Christ Himself but of all His blessings. And yet there would be no impropriety in inferring from this passage a distinction of Persons; for there must be some peculiarity in which the Spirit differs from the Son so as to be another than the Son." In I.13.17. Calvin holds that "the words Father, Son and Holy Spirit certainly indicate a real distinction, not allowing us to suppose that they are

1). c.f.1st.edn.1536 , Opp. 1,59.

merely epithets by which God is variously designated from His works. Still they indicate distinction, not division." His comment on Acts 13.2. (The Holy Ghost said, 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.') is that the Spirit "is a Person truly subsisting in God; for if we admit Sabellius' invention, that the word Spirit importeth no Person, but that it is a bare epithet, that shall be a foolish speech, that the Holy Ghost hath said (Isaias 48.16) 'and now the Lord God, and His Spirit hath sent me', also should foolishly ascribe to Him the sending of a prophet."

Calvin polemically opposes Servetus' contention that the Spirit is merely a "certain external idea that does not truly Subsist in the Divine essence but only figures God to us under a certain form," (I.13.22) or "that the Spirit was a shadow of Deity, and that, according to the mode of distribution, there is a part of God as well in the Son as in the Spirit, just as the same Spirit substantially is a portion of God in us, and also in wood and stone;" "that a Person is nothing else than a visible appearance of the glory of God;" and his "most execrable heresy of all - confounding both the Son and Spirit promiscuously with all the creatures....that the Spirits of the faithful are co-external and consubstantial with God"¹. We can thus well imagine Calvin's horrified attitude to some later interpretations of the Spirit's nature, and now he vehemently abhors any shades of Pantheistic identification

1). idem.

of the Spirit with created things, the naïve assumption that the Spirit and "l'elan vital" are one and the same, or the humanistic figment of a continuum between the Divine and the human spirit, and certainly the Idealistic philosopher's metaphysical conception of 'Spirit' as fundamentally the medium through which God realises Himself in the universe. (Hodgson maintains that this conception determines the whole approach of Wheeler Robinson) (1)

How unsophisticated beside all these does Calvin's own definition appear (I. 13. 6.), that the Holy Spirit (as a Person) is "a distinct subsistence in the Divine essence - a subsistence which while related to the other two (Father and Son) is distinguished from them by incommunicable properties." Elsewhere Calvin admits that the distinction is one of 'relation', yet he would carefully emphasise, with Augustine, that the Holy Spirit is by no means to be reduced to a 'colourless relation;' neither must He be made synonymous with the love that unites the Father and the Son. Whatever sense is given to the Holy Spirit in terms of relation, must also be given to the Father and the Son. He must not even be confused with His gifts. "All these things (gifts) distributes one and the Same Spirit as He will. Unless He were something subsisting in God, He could not be given choice

1) Croall Lectures. Appendix VII

and will. Therefore most clearly does Paul endow the Spirit with Divine power and show that He exists in God hypostatically." (I. 13. 4) Calvin puts it admirably when writing on 1. Cor. 12. 5. "This passage ought to be carefully observed in opposition to fanatics, who think that the name Spirit means nothing essential, but merely the gifts or actions of Divine power. Here, however, Paul plainly testifies that there is one essential power of God, whence all His works proceed. The term Spirit, it is true, is sometimes transferred by metonymy to the gifts themselves. Hence we read of the Spirit of knowledge etc. Paul, however, here testifies that judgment etc. proceed from one source. For it is the office of the Holy Spirit to put forth and exercise the power of God by conferring these gifts upon men, and distributing them among them."

Calvin is thus unambiguous in holding that the Holy Spirit is One, united Self, standing in His own right, distinct from the Father, the Son and from all created things whether inanimate or animate, unhuman or human.

(ii) To demonstrate the Deity of the Holy Spirit, Calvin adduces Scripture and refers to His offices and to His character. He shows that all the peculiar attributes of Deity are ascribed to Him in the same way as to the Son.

"Although," says Calvin, "there is no mention made of the Spirit antecedent to the account of the creation, He is not there introduced as a shadow, but as the essential power of God...the shapeless mass upborne by Him. It is obvious that the eternal Spirit always existed in God,"

(I. 13.22) "The Spirit of God was expanded over the abyss or shapeless matter;...it shows not only that the beauty which the world displays is maintained by the invigorating power of the Spirit, but that even before this beauty existed the Spirit was at work cherishing the confused mass.

(I. 13.14) Creation, asserts Calvin, is assuredly the prerogative of Deity alone.

His divine majesty is also clear from the way in which He sends and inspires prophets. It is "...proper to God...to govern the Church alone, but the Spirit challengeth this right when He commandeth that Paul and Barnabas be separated to Him and testifieth that they were called by His beck." (1)

To be omnipresent , to have life in Himself and to impart physical life and regenerating spiritual life, and to be the author of immortality; to be omniscient and to be the bestower of wisdom and knowledge; to appropriate justification and to promote the deathless energies in the sanctification of sinful men; - all these would make it incumbent upon men to acknowledge His Deity. (I. 13.14.)

1) Comm. Acts 13.2.

Furthermore, says Calvin, Scripture in speaking of Him does not withhold the name of God. For man to be the Temple of the Spirit is for him to be the Temple of God. Commenting on 1. Cor. 3. 16... 'temples of God because the Spirit of God dwells in you'... he says, "In this passage we have an explicit testimony for maintaining the divinity of the Holy Spirit. For if He were a creature, or merely a gift, He would not make us temples of God by dwelling in us. At the same time we learn in what manner God communicates Himself to us and by what tie we are bound to Him, - when He pours down upon us the influence of His Spirit." Again to lie against the Holy Spirit (as did Ananias, Acts. 5. 4.) is to lie against God; when the Holy Spirit speaks, it is God the Lord of Hosts that speaks; to grieve the Holy Spirit is synonymous with vexing God. Were not all these sufficient witnesses to His Deity, there remains the cardinal fact that the supreme sin is that committed in blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and Calvin deems it puerile to dispute His Deity in the light of this. (I. 13. 15)

It could be claimed that Calvin excelled his predecessors in his refusal to hesitate in attributing complete aseity (ἀσέβεια) to the Holy Spirit as well as to the Son: both are designated by him ἀβρόβειος. There is no question, he maintains, of the Holy Spirit, as

Deity, deriving His essence from another, as if God the Father were the only 'essentiator'; He is as much God as God the Father. Calvin does not much favour the terms 'eternal generation' in respect of the Son nor 'eternal procession' as applied to the Holy Spirit, because he fears the doubts that may arise as to the essence of the Spirit.

Despite all this, however, he is constrained to attribute a certain 'principium' to the Person of the Father to whom belongs 'the beginning of action, the fountain and source of all things.' (I. 13.18) Meanwhile he is careful to underline that this derogates nothing from the essential being of the Spirit but only intimates a natural order as to His Person; "the Father being considered first, next the Son from Him, and then the Spirit from both." Calvin is inadvertently involved in these scholasticisms respecting the relation of the Person of the Holy Spirit to the other Persons, because of his traditional conception of the Trinity as being a 'simplex' unity, a mathematical rather than a complex, composite, organic or dynamic unity. He fails to allow himself to go far enough and to realise the 'dynamic' character of the Holy Spirit who might Himself well be the chief Person in maintaining the 'complex unity' of the Godhead.

(iii) In this as well as in his treatment of 'Personality' he may well fall short of the desire of modern theologians. He admittedly does not describe the Holy Spirit as a 'distinct centre of consciousness' with the exact nuance of a later psychology, nor does he make a positive attempt to discountenance the idea that 'persona' might mean something real in its own right but remain an 'It' rather than a 'He'. Neither does he make the explicit statement made later by John Owen that "it is impossible to prove the Father or the Son to be a Person, any other way than we may prove the Holy Ghost to be a Person: for He to whom all personal properties, attributes and operations are ascribed, and to whom nothing is ascribed but what properly belongs to a person, He is a Person."¹ Nevertheless Calvin does succeed in conveying the over-all impression (and this appears more clearly as he proceeds to consider His sovereign energy at work) that a vital and vivifying 'He-ness' belongs to this Divine Person to Whom he almost invariably refers as a 'He' Who, with the Father and the Son, is to be worshipped as One Eternal God.

1). Owen, John. Pneumatologia. Abridged by George Burder
p. 19.

CHAPTER II.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN ACTION.

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The Spirit of God in Action.

1). "The Spirit in Creation."

"We know God, who is Himself invisible, only through His works." This, with Calvin, is a cardinal principle. God, the Sovereign Lord of all, as Spirit, apart from the effects of His Hands, remains in eternal hiddenness; and the holy Spirit will be known only in terms of His bringing to its perfection and consummation the sovereign will of God. This will included the bringing into being of the earth and the heavens in which the Spirit would be operative, directing the drama of life: something utterly new and unique was to happen. "God by the power of His Word and Spirit created out of nothing the heavens and the earth." (I.14.20) "Creation is not the transfusion but the origination of essence out of nothing." (I.15.5) The result, however, of this original creation, was an empty chaos of heaven and earth - an undigested mass; desperately in need of a power outside itself to sustain it and to render it stable. The Spirit of God was this power expanded over the abyss or shapeless matter, moving and agitating them over the waters, either for the sake of putting forth vigour, or brooding over them to cherish them.¹ Moreover this is but the first appearance of the Spirit, and His continual work becomes increasingly apparent in

1). C. Gen. 1. 2.

secretly inspiring the beauty, form and stability of creation. "Send forth thy Spirit, and they shall be created, and thou shalt renew the face of the earth." (I) The presence of the Spirit is indispensable, for "as soon as the Lord takes away His Spirit, all things return to their dust and vanish away." (I) He has His part to play in producing

things inanimate and animate of every kind, (distinguished by a wonderful gradation) arranging an innumerable variety of objects in admirable order, giving each kind its proper nature, office, place and station; at the same time, as all things were liable to corruption, providing for the perpetuation of each single species, cherishing some by secret methods, and, as it were, from time to time instilling new vigour into them, and bestowing on others a power of continuing their race, so preventing it from perishing at their own death. (I.14.20)

Calvin's conception of the mode of the Spirit's working saves him from the extremes of a transcendental Deism on the one hand and an indiscriminate pantheism on the other. In the Holy Spirit transcendence and immanence are maintained, the Spirit never being confounded promiscuously with created objects, yet meanwhile being the life -giving principle in all things.

...by His Spirit He keepeth us in life and upholdeth us. For the power of the Spirit is spread abroad throughout all parts of the world, that it may preserve them in their state; that He may minister unto the heaven and earth that force and

vigour which we see, and motion to all living creatures. Not as brain-sick men trifle, that all things are full of gods, yea that stones are full of gods; but because God doth, by the wonderful power and inspiration of His Spirit, preserve those things which He hath created out of nothing. (1)

Calvin might well favour the use of the term 'Panentheism' which signifies that by the Spirit all things live, move and have their being in God. (2)

In his eagerness to reserve the term 'creation' exclusively to the first creative act and the act of bringing the spiritual part of man into being 'ex nihilo', Calvin, (according to Warfield) (3) is virtually committed to an 'evolutionary' doctrine of 'creation'. Not, of course, that he allows the materialistic conception of the spontaneous, automatic modifications of the original world-stuff due to some intrinsic, inherent forces, completely independent of a directive, external power. Proximate, mediate or second causes certainly have their real existence and function, but they are operative only under the government of God, by His Spirit, and conform to His purpose. The suggestion has been made that had Calvin not subscribed to the belief in the literal six days of the Genesis narrative, but had rather extended them to six periods, he might well be acclaimed the precursor of the modern evolutionary

1). C. Acts. 17. 28.

2). Cf. Hastie "Theology of the Reformed Church" p. 164

3). Warfield. op. cit. p. 304. ff.

theorists. The impersonal and non-theistic elements in the latter's attitude, however, stand out in such graphic contrast to Calvin's essentially personal, teleological and theological approach that any comment on our part would be redundant.

No attempt is made by Calvin, however, to hide the fact that his real interest is practical and not speculative. He strains, as it were, at the leash, to have done with discussing the created universe as such in order to examine the relation of the Spirit to man - the zenith of creation - in all the ramifications of his life. He indulges in no fancies about the pre-creation activities of the Spirit, and although he describes in some detail the creation of the angels - the good and the subsequently bad ones - his treatment is parenthetical and shows no trace of fantasy. Moreover, although at this juncture the angels have a vital part to play in the life of man, in his later development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's direct contact with man, Calvin does not seem to allow them any specific, regulative place.

Calvin thus launches into the comprehensive problem of the life of the human creature - and especially of the fallen human creature - under the aegis of the Sovereignty of God. He harbours no illusions about the drastic and

cataclysmic results of sin in the life of man as well as in his physical environment, but he jealously maintains that the Holy Spirit is in nowise bowed out of things, but is in action, pointing to God and depriving man of any excuse.

11). The Spirit in Natural revelation
and in our knowledge of God.

Man as initially created, a living soul, with an unsullied spiritual capacity admitting him to the supreme privilege of communion through the Spirit with God, forfeited that power by his sin. His rebellion against God through his pride, his disobedience to, and despising of, revealed truth, and his lying to the Almighty, rendered him liable to the wrath of God - the reaction of God's holiness to human sin. Moreover, he suffered a radical change in his nature and the total loss of supernatural gifts. Corruption ensued in his personality and natural gifts, and the spiritual blindness which became rife made him incapable of attaining to a true knowledge of God, a filial and comforting experience of the paternal favour of God, and a clear method of regulating his conduct in conformity with God's law (II. 2.18)

Despite, however, the Spirit's removal of the specifically spiritual gifts, He did not leave men completely devoid of data which would indicate not only the presence and reality of God but also, to a considerable degree, His character. Even in man's achieving a knowledge of himself, -when he comes to self-consciousness, -he is obliged to realise that this comes concomitantly with the knowledge of God as being over against him. He comes to

know himself as a person in terms of an objective Person other than himself. He becomes conscious of the 'God-shaped blank' in his human heart, and try as he may, he cannot, of himself, alleviate the anguish caused by that vacuum. He is made to see that his very being is derived from God and is helplessly dependent upon Him; his acute realization of his imperfections, and the frustration of his hopes and aspirations have no meaning except in terms of a Being in whom perfection is found untrammelled. Further, his conscience-qualms in the light of his failures to achieve his own standards, which by an innate knowledge he knows to be mere adumbrations of an objective norm, make man cower in hidden or manifest concern for his welfare at the hands of Him with whom he has to do, - to whom he is ultimately responsible.

Therefore the innate knowledge of God found in man cannot be described as insipid, and his position is by no means excusable. The ingrained 'sense of divinity' in his very constitution is indicated unmistakably by the elaborate, if mistaken, religious ceremonies and superstitions of primitive people, in the deep-seated awe of so-called atheists, and the fear of judgment and death in the hearts of sinners generally.

Lest man, however, should try to acquit himself on the grounds that this knowledge which he has is merely subjective and is therefore vitiated by all the weakness of subjectivity, the Spirit draws his attention to what He has produced in the natural order, starting with the wondrous intricacy of man's own body. The evidences of the Spirit's working and demonstration of the majesty, eternity, wisdom and power of God are placarded before man's eyes, in such manner that he who runs may read; the whole created universe - the 'macrocosm' of which man is the 'microcosm' (I. 5.3) - is a theatre displaying the glory of God; every atom of nature is so pregnant with the Spirit's power (I. 5.1) that (but here Calvin studiously avoids any materialistic or pantheistic interpretation) one who has the right spiritual insight might, not without justification, say that nature is God. (I.5.5.) The universe, as under the Spirit's hand, is everything but 'the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms', as Bertrand Russell would say. The footprint of Deity is certainly unmistakable and indelible on the sands of time.

If by any conceivable means this were not sufficient, then surely the Spirit's manifest providential directing of the affairs of men in history would be irrefutable. "For God in conducting the affairs of men so arranges the

course of His providence as daily to declare by the clearest manifestations that though all are in innumerable ways the partakers of His bounty, the righteous are the special object of His favour, the wicked and profane the special objects of His severity." (I.5.7.) Both the co-operation and the chaos of individuals and nations alike are indices of the mighty and benign power, round about and underneath historical events.

Despite, however, this panoramic exhibition by the Spirit of God's munificence, and the irreproachable clarity of this objective general revelation, the radical effects of sin in the human heart are such that man is totally unable to make use of it in order truly to know God.

iii). The Common graces of the Spirit.

The picture painted by Calvin of the fallen nature of man might well lead us to expect in the history of mankind an unrelieved blackness - "a night in which all cows are black!" It might be argued that down the centuries, a minority only could exult in the regenerating influences of the Spirit and confess to a personal knowledge of God in Christ. Nevertheless, a cursory glance at the annals of men convinces us that unremitting strife and the perpetration of ghastly deeds are by no means the only facts presented, but rather that, time and again, highly laudable actions have come from these miserable creatures who are described as the enemies of God. How can this be accounted for?

We could aver with the Pelagians that fallen man, if only he is so inclined, is as capable of doing good as unfallen man; or we could follow the Arminians in saying that certain gracious influences of the Spirit on man's corrupt nature make him capable later of choosing salvation of his own accord and of doing good; or we could submit to the Roman Catholic claim that ordinary moral deeds are well within man's orbit, although such goodness as would merit salvation must be supernaturally mediated!

To all these heresies Calvin is diametrically opposed.

He holds uncompromisingly the depravity of man, the entry of sin into every faculty, but although reserving for the elect the radical healing of sin by the Holy Spirit, he maintains that the Spirit exerts a restraining power in the non-elect, so that the sin of man does not pour forth in a catastrophic manner, completely disrupting civilised life. The Holy Spirit uses the common human sense of shame, the fear of being found out and punished, the utilitarian value of good conduct and the prestige it secures, to keep in check the volcanic forces that would otherwise cause such havoc. "It is easy to see what the result would be if the Lord were to permit human passion to follow its bent. No ravenous beast would rush so furiously, no stream, however rapid and violent so impetuously burst its banks....God....curbs the perverseness of nature, preventing it from breaking forth into action, yet without rendering it inwardly pure." (II.3.3.)

The Spirit of life, wisdom and power is thus at work in all men - oftentimes working despite their perverseness, and so arranging things that there is 'nothing haphazard in the universe.' Man is still man, and although the divine image has been grossly outraged, there is a certain light discernible in him on which the Spirit works. Calvin, however, steps very cautiously on this point as he shows in his exposition of John. 1.9. - 'the light that lighteth

every man that cometh into the world.' This light is, in the last analysis, Christ Himself; but in this context we are to understand :

that from this light the rays are diffused over all mankind. ...For we know that men have this peculiar excellence which raises them above other animals, that they are endued with reason and intelligence, and that they carry the distinction between right and wrong engraven on their conscience. There is no man, therefore, whom some perception of the eternal light does not reach.

But as there are fanatics who rashly strain and torture this passage, so as to infer from it that the grace of illumination is equally offered to all, let us remember that the only subject here treated is the common light of nature, which is far inferior to faith; for never will any man, by all the acuteness and sagacity of his own mind, penetrate into the Kingdom of God. It is the Spirit of God alone who opens the gate of heaven to the elect.

Next, let us remember that the light of reason which God implanted in men has been so obscured by sin, that amidst the thick darkness, shocking ignorance, and gulf of errors, there are scarcely any shining sparks that are not utterly extinguished.

Calvin would not utterly disparage the 'good deeds' of commendable men but would not allow that their deeds did more than feebly approximate to the true standard of goodness. Outward conformity to law and an adherence to a moral code, lacking in disinterestedness and the pure motive and disposition, was not what Calvin believed to be true goodness. To proceed a step further and to challenge the doers of these deeds as to whether they did

them in godly fear, reverential awe and for the express glory of God, would soon reveal whether the 'goodness' bore any relation to the holy goodness of the gospel and the purity of the Spirit. Within the orbit of this general, 'non-spiritual' goodness certain degrees can be distinguished as e.g. the difference between sins of ignorance and sins of malice. The 'milk of human kindness' has far from turned completely sour in some personalities, while in others it is fit for nothing but for being summarily discarded. The Roman Camillus, whom Calvin cites, could be described in the former manner, while Catiline was quite otherwise.

What Calvin exhorts us to remember, however, is that any goodness whatever outside of the realm of regeneration is due to the fact that the Spirit of God has superimposed it there. It is there because God in His general goodness and lovingkindness has willed it to be present, but it will never gradually merge into the goodness required by the holy, righteous will of God as revealed in Christ.

iv). The 'Cultural activities' of the Spirit.

'Man does not live by bread alone' but shows evidence of his ultimate need of the regenerating Word of God by His Spirit. But he also shows a proximate need of acclimatising himself to the physical and social environment in which he finds himself. As he has applied himself diligently to the task of finding out more about the universe and has sought to bring out the latent and hidden beauties of creation in conformity with the flights of his imaginations and idealisms, are we to admit that his success has been independent of God? Is not the Spirit who directs him, or rather, overrules him in the sphere of his moral life also the inspirer of Truth and Beauty?

Calvin answers that it is by the Spirit alone that man can respond to the injunction to "keep the Garden and dress it" - to discipline himself and the things on which he lays his hands in order to their improvement and amelioration.

He shows that the sons of Cain¹ after sin had entered,

though deprived of the Spirit of regeneration were yet endued with gifts of no despicable kind; just as the experience of all ages teaches us how widely the rays of divine light have shone on unbelieving nations for the benefit of the present life; and we see, at the present time, that the excellent gifts of the Spirit are diffused through the whole human race. Moreover, the liberal arts and sciences have descended to us from the heathen. We are, indeed compelled to

1). C. Gen. 4. 22.

acknowledge that we have received astronomy and the other parts of philosophy, medicine and the order of civil government from them. Nor is it to be doubted that God has thus liberally enriched them with excellent favours that their impiety might have the less excuse.

Calvin frequently warns us not to treat disdainfully cultural attainments wherever they are found lest in so doing we do despite to the Spirit of God. "If we reflect that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we will be careful, as we would avoid offering insult to Him, not to reject or condemn truth wherever it appears. In despising the gifts, we insult the Giver."(II.2.15.)

As for these arts then that have nothing of superstition, but contain solid learning, and are founded on just principles as they are useful and suited to the common transactions of human life, so there can be no doubt that they have come forth from the Holy Spirit and the advantage which is derived and experienced from them ought to be ascribed exclusively to God. (1)

Natural perspicacity is a gift of God and the liberal arts and all the sciences by which wisdom is acquired, are gifts of God.....They are confined, however, within their own limits; for into God's heavenly Kingdom they cannot penetrate. Hence they must occupy the place of handmaid, not of mistress: nay more, they must be looked upon as empty and worthless, until they have become entirely subject to the word and Spirit of God. (2)

1). C. 1. Cor. 1. 17.

2). C. 1. Cor. 3. 19.

Calvin tells us not to be afraid of conceding, rather of claiming, that the Spirit dispenses gifts to whom He will, for this does not imply His indwelling as the Spirit of holiness. All it means is that God "fills, moves, and invigorates all things by virtue of the Spirit, and that according to the peculiar nature which each class of beings has received by the Law of Creation." (II.2.16.)

What value then, is there in Calvin's conception of the action of the Spirit of God in the panoramic sphere of life? For the Christian, it can extensively widen his horizons and fill him with awe and confidence as he contemplates the Sovereignty of God outwitting man and turning his wrath to praise Him and triumphing over the crippling and cramping power of sin. Calvin need not approach the world in a fugitive or hesitant or obscurantist manner; he can take it with both hands. It is God's world although grievously marred: the Spirit sees to that. He will not over-estimate, nor be extravagant in his eulogies of the attainments of pagan men in the intellectual, aesthetic or technological spheres, knowing that so often, they are the results of the Spirit's working over and above and despite the proclivity of men to sin.

Man may gratefully take a keen interest in the diverse cultural fields of art, architecture, music, and poetry; philosophy and science may occupy his mind and politics

are not outwith his jurisdiction. By the Spirit's government all these are shown to be under the sovereign canopy of God, and they can be, and must be, and actually are, used to work out the majestic sweep of the eternal counsels and decrees of His purpose and so ultimately promote His glory.

Calvin, however, continually has, as it were, his tongue in his cheek, because he knows that in this context of nature and history, creation and providence, despite its variety and richness, continuity, development and teleological character, the Spirit shows only God's Fingers. The stubborn fact is that man's sin has everywhere a paralysing and blinding influence, and he is not disillusioned by the running commentary of the centuries on man's failure rightly to use his achievements, because he knows that if he is to see God's Face - even a mere glimpse of it, the Spirit must work in a radically new and exclusive manner.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE WORD.

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The Spirit and the Word.

"The quality of mercy is not strained....."

Magnanimity and large-heartedness have featured prominently in Calvin's treatment of the 'catholic' and 'charitable' undertakings of the Spirit in the courts of nature and of human relationships. It is to be suspected, however, that this is somehow 'too true to be good,' (as well as 'too good to be true'), and it is not long before he assumes the role of a veritably merciless hunter of the 'skeleton in the cupboard' - the sin in the heart of man.

Calvin has eloquently set on a pedestal the general revelation of the Spirit as it appears in the forum of self-consciousness, nature and providence, and he has unambiguously presented it as objectively real and marvellously wrought. But what an inglorious 'white elephant' it is after all - at least as regards carrying man to the desired knowledge of God. What a poignant figure man cuts as a Tantalus, standing in the Tartarus of natural revelation, up to his chin, as it were, in water, but incapable of partaking of, and enjoying, the delectable fruit suspended above him and the thirst-quenching water, so near and yet so far - all because of the stubbornly inhibiting force of his sin. It cannot be over-emphasised that the fault is not outside of man but within his nature;

the elaborately fashioned objective revelation has no worthy complement in the porosis of man's subjective condition.

This constitutes a cosmic conundrum for the Holy Spirit and calls for a more drastic and direct action upon man. Yet the Spirit cannot at this juncture crash in, unmediated, upon man's situation, but must rather work 'mediately' in terms of what is certainly a more direct, immediate, albeit exclusive, objective revelation. The burning point of the human predicament is radical moral deformity wedded to mental and spiritual blindness. This is of such proportions throughout the whole gamut of civilisation that the Spirit can take nothing for granted and can not assume that He is supplied ready to hand with adequate vehicles for His revelatory operations.

Although men in general, however, have not the capacity to receive God's revelation, the Spirit according to the will of God, can be personally responsible for isolating and insulating persons as individuals (and as nations) and dealing directly with them and governing their steps and impelling them along definite lines.

It is to some a debatable point whether the Spirit of God acts merely towards a man's soul or clearly within man's soul. Calvin believes that in producing the exclusive

revelation to the end of man's salvation, the Spirit did not hesitate to impinge upon the men of His choice and to penetrate into their spirits in a unique manner. The human situation is so desperate and man so impotent that God must break in from His side. There must be no doubt as to the identity of His imprimatur on His dealings with men. There must be synchronously a revealing - a self-manifesting - on His part, and a calling forth of a people to whom the revelation is imparted. This need not necessarily mean that this people is an insensitive and irresponsible pawn, bandied to and fro on a universal chess-board, according to the whims or, far worse, the sinister manoeuvres of a Cosmic Chess-player. Far less need it imply that God must be conceived in an absolutist manner as enveloping and swallowing up in Himself the objects of creation both human and otherwise, thus vitiating their essential individual identity. He is not the sum-total of things in the sense that the individual object is not numerically distinct from Him. Were the latter the case, it would follow that the least activity on the part of the Spirit of God would automatically mean an activity within the soul of man, inasmuch as that soul is a part of Him. As has already been indicated, such an idea of identity and continuity between man and God is repugnant to Calvin, and in whatever way he represents God as conveying His truth and will to man

he emphatically does not wish to be accused of such Absolutist heresies. Much as his theory of the inspiration of the Spirit might seem to point in this direction, his over-all conception of God's transcendence, sovereignty and individuality must ever be borne in mind, and Absolutism must not be superimposed on his theory.

Calvin believes that among the first ostensible actions of the Spirit of God in the process of revelation there stands out the calling and segregation of the people of Israel. Israel was to be an exclusive agent in His hands, and its history, on the plane of its corporate life as a unit among nations, was to be a cardinal factor in the revelational scheme. Its choice resided in the Sovereign will of God, and the same will, by the Spirit, led to the choice of individuals within the nation who would be the recipients of special overtures of the Spirit. The Spirit did not adopt a stereotyped pattern in His approach to men but rather employed devious and diverse means of communicating the truth of God.

Men, at the earlier stages of revelation, were privileged to have theophanies produced before them by the Spirit. They encountered also physical phenomena and external, sensuous symbols, instinct with meaning. To seers and prophets the Spirit conveyed His messages through visions and dreams and

by means of voices. All these, however, were, to a considerable degree, prefatory and preliminary; they prepared the way, and the conducive setting for the farther method of revelation of the Spirit, namely the written Word. It was necessary that the transient should have pioneered the route for the relatively more abiding and tangible and ever available and referable. In the written Word

he importeth no dreams...but that it is the very testimony of God, which must be received with authority. And hereby we see that in all the visions which the ancient fathers had, God did set certain tokens to amaze them, and to put them in some terror and fear, which served to authorise His Word, to the end it should be received the better. For we see how men are not so well inclined to hear God speak as they ought to be, except He make them to feel His majesty. (1)

1). Sermon Job. 3. 12-19. C.R. LXI 151.

1). The Inspiration of Scripture.

In face of the impasse reached by men through their sin, the Holy Spirit introduced the emergency measure - the production of a written record. The saving words of God and the facts and acts relating to the salvation of men were to be recorded and handed down to posterity, by the generations to which they were committed. Calvin is adamant on the inseparable connection between the Holy Spirit and the Written Word and we must consider what he has to say about the fact, the mode and the evidences of Inspiration by the Spirit.

a) The Fact of Inspiration.

Now, whether God was manifested to men by visions or oracles, what are called celestial witnesses, or ordained men as His ministers who taught their successors by tradition, it is in every case certain that He impressed on their hearts such a certitude of the doctrine, that they were persuaded and convinced that what had been revealed and preached to them proceeded from the true God: for He always ratified His word so as to secure for it a credit above all human opinion. Finally, that the truth might uninterruptedly remain continually in vigour from age to age, and be known in the world, He willed that the revelations which He had committed to the hands of the Fathers as a deposit, should be put on record: and it was with this design that He had the Law published, to which He afterwards added the Prophets as its expositors. (I. 6.2.)

Calvin unequivocally maintains that these 'deposited revelations' which had been 'put on record' were for him and his contemporaries and for all time, coextensive with the Old and New Testaments as contained in the present Canon of Scripture.

Calvin has been championed by a number of scholars such as Warfield and Cramer as having by no means sheepishly and uncritically followed the Church in taking over, en bloc, the recognised Canon. In his preface to the Apocrypha Calvin says:

These books which are called Apocryphal have in all ages been discriminated from those which are without difficulty shown to be of the Sacred Scriptures. For the ancients, wishing to anticipate the danger that any profane books should be mixed with those which certainly proceeded from the Holy Spirit, made a roll of these latter which they called 'Canon'; meaning by this word that all that was comprehended under it was the assured rule to which we should attach ourselves.....it is only right that what we have been given by the Holy Spirit should have pre-eminence above all that has come from men. (1)

Calvin believes then that the Holy Spirit not only presided over the production of the Sacred writings (as we shall see) but safeguarded their preservation and their providential arrangement into one recognised volume. As he takes up the several books, however, Calvin adopts a historico-critical attitude; he applies a twofold test to the various books, looking for external

1). see Opera. IX. 827, note.

and internal data suggestive of the Apostolic imprimatur. He asks whether there has been, on the whole, an unbroken attestation of their Apostolicity down the centuries and, secondly, whether their internal calibre is of undoubted Apostolic stamp.

It was thus, as Cramer describes it, as the result of scientific investigations that Calvin fixed the limits of the canon... ..not a priori, but a posteriori, that he came to the recognition of the canonicity of the Biblical books. What great importance Calvin attaches to the question whether a Biblical book is apostolic! If it is not apostolic he does not recognise it as canonical. To determine its apostolicity, he appeals not merely to the ecclesiastical tradition of its origin, but also and principally to its contents. (1)

In his treatment of the text with which he was presented, he applied himself with reverent yet unflinching scholarship, and was at least abreast of the scientific approach then obtaining. His Humanistic training contributed to this, but he did not play fast and loose with the current text as did other scholars. Cramer again indicates that

Calvin does not largely busy himself with textual criticism. He follows the text which was generally received in his day. It deserves notice only that he exercises a free and independent judgment and recognises the rights of science...he comes forward on scientific grounds against the Vulgate (in its text of 1 John. 5.7.)

1). Warfield op.cit. p. 57 note 28. from Cramer's "Nieuwe Bijdragen op het gebied van Godgeleerdheid en Wijsbegeerte III, 1881, p. 126

The decree of Trent that this version must be followed as 'authentic', he finds silly; and reverence for it as if it had fallen down from heaven, 'ludicrous'. How can anyone dispute the right to appeal to the original text? And what a bad version this is! There are scarcely three verses in any page well rendered. (1)

This last quotation leaves no doubt that it was for the original scriptures and their authors that Calvin claimed the inspiration of the Spirit in an exclusive way. This inspiration he claimed for all the sixty-six books now found in our Canon. Warfield and others have shown sufficiently that there are no adequate grounds for accusing Calvin of not admitting the inspiration of such books as the second and third epistles of John and Second Peter, and that the fact that he did not write commentaries on the book of Revelation and the books of Solomon does not imply his opposition to their canonicity, inasmuch as elsewhere in his writings he quotes them with the same liberty and confidence as the others. It is clear then, that Calvin believes that in the Bible as it stands, in its Old and New Testaments, he has at his disposal a wonderfully produced and preserved, complete and exclusive revelation of God, and that the One in control of all this is the Holy Spirit.

1). Acta Synod. Trident, etc. pp. 414-416
Cramer op. cit. pp. 116-117. Warfield p. 59.

b) The Mode of Inspiration.

Calvin, no more than any other scholar before him or since, claims to be able, (nor indeed attempts) to describe fully the psychology of inspiration. If this operation of the Holy Spirit

could be described in complete detail, we should lose thereby and not gain. We have to allow for the working of a non-rational factor because the result is a non-rational result. He who believes in the principle of revelation thereby affirms his conviction that we need to know more than we can discover and that this need has been met by a direct word from God Himself. That is obviously a matter of faith. The Word came by faith in the first place, and (as we shall see later) it is by faith that others must accept it.(1)

Calvin is more dogmatic about the 'non-rational' element. Indeed he has been accused of making the whole process of inspiration non-rational, throwing the whole onus of the work on to the Holy Spirit and depriving the human subject of any real function.

Calvin quite clearly distinguishes between the inspiration of the Scripture writers on the one hand and all other claims to inspiration whether in sacred or in secular literature. We have seen that he fully recognised the activity of the Holy Spirit in literature in the wider sphere of learning, but not only is this

1). Lewis Edwin. "A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation" p.256

inspiration inferior to the inspiration of the Word, but it often serves to show that the latter inspiration by the Spirit is sui generis. The Scripture writers, as specially privileged witnesses of the unique revelation of God, are in an unparalleled manner given by the Spirit the inner meaning of the redemptive acts of God.

There is this difference between the apostles and their successors, they were sure and authentic amanuenses of the Holy Spirit and therefore their writings are to be regarded as the oracles of God, whereas others have no other office than to teach what is delivered and sealed in the Holy Scriptures (IV.8.9.) God addresses His Word indiscriminately to others, says Calvin, whomsoever He is pleased to teach by His Word, but He speaks to and addresses His prophets in a peculiar way, for He makes them the ministers and heralds of His Word, and puts, as it were, into their mouth what they afterwards bring forth to the people.....for the Lord did not simply address the Prophet in a common way, but furnished him with instructions, that he might afterwards teach the people, as it were, in the Person of God Himself..Hosea.....brought forth nothing from his own brain, but God spoke by him.....They give not themselves loose reins, but faithfully deliver, as it were, from hand to hand, what the Lord has commanded them, without adding anything whatever of their own. ¹

In even stronger terms Calvin says

When that which professes to be the Word of God is acknowledged to be so, no person, unless devoid of common sense

1). C. Minor Prophets. Vol. 1. p. 162

and the feelings of a man, will have the desperate hardihood to refuse credit to the speakers. But since no daily responses are given from heaven, and the Scriptures are the only records in which God has been pleased to consign the truth to perpetual remembrance, the full authority which they ought to possess with the faithful is not recognised, unless they are believed to have come from heaven, as directly as if God had been heard giving utterance to them. (1.7.1.) A Prophet who, guided by the Holy Spirit, honestly delivers to men the doctrine which he has received from heaven - 'cometh in the name of God.' (1)

The same strong line is taken by Calvin in commenting on 2. Tim. 3.16. when he points out that Paul

commends the Scripture on account of its authority.....In order to uphold the authority of Scripture, he declares that it is divinely inspired; for, if it be so, it is beyond all controversy that men ought to receive it with reverence. This is a principle which distinguishes our religion from all others, that we know that God hath spoken to us, and are fully convinced that the prophets did not speak at their own suggestion, but that, being organs of the Holy Spirit, they only uttered what they had been commissioned from heaven to declare. Whoever then wishes to profit in the Scriptures, let him, first of all, lay down this as a settled point, that the Law and the Prophets are not a doctrine delivered according to the will and pleasure of men, but dictated by the Holy Spirit.

1). O. John. 12. 13.

In these quotations (which could be considerably multiplied) we have met with such words as 'amanuenses' and 'dictated', and scholars of Calvin's works admit that he said that the Scripture authors did not speak or write "ex suo sensu, not humano impulsu, not sponte sua, not arbitrio suo, but set out only quae coelitus mandata fuerant." (1)

His most worthy and ardent admirers, however, have spared no pains in essaying to show that while recognising the over-all interest that the Holy Spirit takes in the inspiration of Scripture, we are not obliged to conclude that, for Calvin, the personality of the writer was utterly swamped and submerged or was reduced to an insensitive typewriter or inanimate robot, being thus rendered irrelevant as a 'human' organ. Cramer remarks (2)

It is true that Calvin gave the impulse (to a subsequent view of scripture) more than any other of the Reformers. But we must not forget that here we can speak of nothing more than the impulse. We nowhere find in Calvin such a magical conception of the Bible as we find in the later dogmatists. It is true he used the term 'dictare' and other expressions which he employs under the influence of the terminology of his day, but on the other hand - in how many respects does he recognise the human factor in the Scriptures!

As an instance of the latter could be cited Calvin's

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- 1). Cramer op. cit. p. 102, 3. "as in Warfield, op.cit. p.61.
 2). Cramer op. cit. p. 142. "as in Warfield, op.cit. p.60.
 note.36.

reference in his Preface to 2. Peter to the existence of a distinct style of writing in Peter..."I do not recognise in it (2.Peter) the true and natural phrase of St. Peter." In the light of this, we must not take Pannier's statement¹ that "the Word of God is (for Calvin) one, verbum Dei and not verba Dei. The diversity of authors disappears before the unity of the Spirit," as meaning that there is no difference between the authors, and that the One Spirit dictates indiscriminately to them all.

Warfield suggests that the use of 'dictation' is merely figurative and that what Calvin applies the word to is not the mode or process of inspiration but the end result attained by the Holy Spirit, namely that the resultant Word has been secured 'as if it were by dictation.' A figurative use of dictare might also find a parallel in the way in which we speak of the 'dictates' of conscience!² Cramer³ advances a farther view that Calvin borrowed dictare "from the current ecclesiastical usage, which employed it of the auctor primarius of Scripture, as indeed also of tradition. Thus the Council of Trent uses the expression dictante Spiritu Sancto of the unwritten tradition inspired by the Holy Spirit."

The redoubtable defender of Calvin - Doumergue claims that the French editions of the Institutes (from 1545.

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- 1). Le Temoignage du Saint-Esprit. 1893 p. 203
op. cit. p. 64. note 45.
 - 2). Warfield, cf. opp. l. 632. verba quodammodo dictante Christi Spiritu.
 - 3). Cramer op. cit. p. 114...as in Warfield, idem.

onwards) translate (what is rendered from the Latin as) "at the dictation of the Holy Spirit" by 'les inspirant et dressant à cela - 'the Holy Spirit inspiring and training them thereto', or even 'drawing them up in array in order thereto', Also 'the certain and authentic amanuenses of the Holy Spirit' is translated, or rather paraphrased, by 'les notaires jurez du Saint Esprit - authentiques - 'the sworn notaries public of the Holy Spirit, whose writings¹ are authentic.' R.E. Davies, however, does not consider that Doumergue succeeds in gainsaying the fact that Calvin advocates a theory of verbal inspiration by the Spirit. Still less would he agree with ^{what he would regard as} E. Rabaud's colourful and imaginative description of Calvin's theory in which he claims that

the action of God does not, in Calvin's view, transform the sacred authors into machines. Jewish verbalism, Scriptural materialism, may be present in germ in the ideas of the Institutes - and the cold intellects of certain doctors of the Protestant scholasticism of the next century developed them - but they are very remote from the thought of the Reformer. Chosen and ordained by God, the Biblical writers were subject to a higher impulse; they received a divine illumination which increased the energy of their natural faculties; they understood the Revelation better and transmitted it more faithfully. It was scarcely requisite for this, however, that they should be passive instruments, simple secretaries, pens moved by the Holy Spirit. Appointed but intelligent organs of the divine thought, far from being subject to a dictation, in complete obedience to the immediate will of God, they acted under the impulsion² of a personal faith which God communicated to them.



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- 1). Davies The problem of authority in the Continental Reformers p. 115.
- 2). Rabaud "Histoire de la doctrine de l'inspiration.... dans les pays de langue française." 1883 pp.52 sq.

It may be contended that Rabaud reads in too much of his own conceptions into Calvin's theory and that he is too generous in his attitude to the Reformer. All the same there are passages in Calvin which give room for a richer interpretation than has customarily been given.

In commenting on the locus classicus 2.Peter 1. 20,21. ... "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," Calvin says that.....

God speaks to us (in Scripture) and not men.... Holy men of God....did not of themselves or according to their own will, foolishly deliver their own inventions....they were moved - not that they were bereaved of mind (as the Gentiles imagined their prophets to have been) but because they dared not to announce anything of their own, and obediently followed the Spirit as their guide, who ruled in their mouth as in His own sanctuary.

Two facts clearly emerge from this comment. First, that the mind of the writer of Scripture was not shelved or shut up but was consciously in operation. The Holy Spirit was using the waking and responsive processes of the mind and personality in attaining the result; or, in the idiom of John Owen, the Holy Spirit 'acted the faculties'. But secondly, and more particularly, there was a defined moral and volitional element, contributing in a marked degree. The significant factor in the whole

situation was obedience in the Holy Ghost. It was not merely that the mind was not put out of action or the intellectual energies not petrified, or at least not by-passed. What was more important was that there was a positive facing up to the advances of the Spirit, a realisation of the claims of God upon them and a due response thereto. The writers were not remote and detached spectators, as it were, observing objectively the Spirit using parts of their being, meanwhile making a travesty of their persons. Rather were they living 'existentially'. In the Holy Ghost they were being constituted media of Revelation, sanctuaries for the Shekinah of the Word of God. The Spirit was achieving an eschatological result in the concrete situation of the event of faith and obedience - an event which would have been impossible except in the mystery of the Holy Spirit. In a sense, there was a finality, a once-for-all-ness in the crisis enacted through the Spirit in the life of the inspired recipient of the Word of God. In the confrontation of the Spirit of God there was no place for a phlegmatic acquiescence in interesting and informative data, or in bare 'truths of revelation'; the challenge and claim of Deity were the most potent factors, and the servant of God humbly - gladly, after the melting, by the Spirit, of his reluctance in some cases - yielded to the Person who was

speaking to him, and ultimately through him, to the world of men.

Some would describe this dramatic situation produced by and in the Spirit in terms of a hypostatic union between the mind and will of God and the mind and will of man. It could be suggested that the idea of a hypostatic relation attributed to Calvin in his conception of preaching and the sacraments, (which we shall consider later) is applicable in this present context. Namely, that the Word of God revealed by the Spirit to the inspired writer and the actual word written by the writer are held together in the Spirit not in the sense of an 'identical' relation (or proposition) but rather in that of an 'analogical' relation. Or again, that this hypostatic union between the written work and the Word of the Spirit must be conceived in terms of the 'analogy of faith' rather than that of the 'analogy of being.'

One thing is certain, however we frame our description of Calvin's conception of inspiration by the Spirit, that in some unique sense, (for him,) the Holy Spirit Himself speaks in Scripture and has taken an intensely personal interest in the most intricate details of its production. We are left in no doubt that He made it His business to direct the choice of words, the style of writing and even

the order of the books.

His comment on Jeremiah 5. 3. "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth," in which he refers to 1. Sam. 16. 7. and says that "there the Holy Spirit expresses the same thing by 'heart' as He does here by 'fidelity' or 'truth';" indicates Calvin's belief that the Spirit was responsible for the selection of words. Similarly in the Commentary on the Harmony of the Pentateuch, Exodus 4. 21. where he writes, "as to myself, I am certainly not ashamed of speaking as the Holy Spirit speaks.....". Or in Psalm 126. 4. "The Holy Spirit indited this form of prayer". and in Psalm 129. 4. "The Holy Spirit not unfitly compares us to....." And again in Isaiah 14. 26. "They who suppose that the prophet, or rather the Spirit of God, uses too many words, are not well acquainted with themselves."

The Spirit's influence on the style of the writing Calvin indicates in I. 8.2.

I confess, however, that in elegance and beauty, nay, splendour, the style of some of the prophets is not surpassed by the eloquence of heathen writers. By examples of this description, the Holy Spirit was pleased to show that it was not from want of eloquence he in other instances used a rude and homely style... the majesty of the Spirit....appears conspicuous in all.

The Spirit is also concerned with the arrangement of the matter as appears in the Preface to his Commentary on

the Harmony of the Pentateuch....."the order which the Holy Spirit has prescribed to us." Calvin accounts for the differences in the Synoptic Gospels by saying that... "the Spirit of God fitly allotted to the several evangelists their parts, so that what we do not find in one or two of them we can learn from others."¹

c) Evidences of the Spirit's Inspiration.

Calvin devotes a whole chapter in the Institutes to enumerating internal and external evidences or 'proofs' of the special inspiration of scripture. He cites the richness and beauty of the harmonious arrangement of the several parts. It is the dignity of the matter or substance itself that attracts rather than ostentatious style. The truth they present needs no tinselly adornment and so an unpolished simplicity can be adopted. The efficacy of the Scriptures and their effect on the reader, being uniquely different from that of pagan writings indicate that they were wrought in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. On the other hand, no one can deny that when it pleases the Spirit, the prophets write in a brilliant oratorical style utterly beyond what could be expected of their natural capacities. Calvin then mentions the antiquity of the Scriptures as compared with rival literature and the unstinting disinterestedness and sincerity of the writers

1). C. Harmony of Synoptic Gospels, Luke 24. 13.

which enable them to record truths which cut across the grain of even their own lives. The accounts of the miracles performed (to which magical practices have no affinity) and the prophetic predictions and their fulfilment, demonstrate to Calvin the indubitable operation of the Spirit.

As external evidences Calvin points to the amazing preservation of these productions of the Spirit throughout the centuries. Side by side with this is the surprising consensus of opinion of the saints as to their veracity, while on so many other issues the saints have been divided. Finally the blood of the martyrs cries out with unabated eloquence, putting it beyond dispute that the Scriptures for which they had yielded up their spirits had descended from the Supreme Spirit.

(ii) The Inner Testimony of the Spirit.

As we follow the steps of Calvin's arguments and conception of Revelation and Inspiration and the nature of man, it is felt that he leads us, as it were, through the veils of man's darkness and doubts and the blinding power of sin, into the very Unholy of Unholies. He starts off on this conducted tour and shows the first exhibit - the self-consciousness of man. A little ahead he points out the tapestries of Nature and, further on, the intricacies of Providence and the historical sequence. But he then quite unashamedly tells us that although these three are objectively intact and of an admirable quality, they can not be used by man to lead him to a personal knowledge of God, because of his sin.

He then leads us on apace and unveils the unique exhibit - the Written Word of God, and having listened to his eulogies about this body of truth, and noted the characteristics which argue for its divinity and inspiration, we may well feel that we have reached the destination. But no, says Calvin; just as the objective general revelation was vitiated by human sin, so again this special revelation in the Word of God, despite its unrivalled glory, is incapable of being known in the profound and inner sense to be the Word of God, and be creative of a living and true faith, because of human sin. How great is the darkness!

Calvin's figure is that the Scripture, as the Word of God, plays the part of 'spectacles' for those who cannot read God from Nature and the kindred media. But what he now says is that a further miracle must be performed: the blind eyes must be opened that they may be able to look and see through the spectacles! The Holy Spirit alone accomplishes this 'ocular' operation and the experience which follows is allied to what Calvin describes as the Inner Testimony of the Spirit. When the Spirit gives His Testimony in the heart of the reader, creating assurance and confidence in the divinity of the Word of God, it is not that He renders redundant the indicia (which as we saw, Calvin does not consider a waste of time to enumerate) but that He enables them to assume a new and corroborative significance, providing subsidiary grounds for our belief in the inspiration of the Word. The testimony of the Spirit, and it alone, conduces to a 'sound, firm faith and true piety.'

The passage in which Calvin speaks of the testimony of the Spirit is of singular quality and we can do no better than allow him to speak for himself in extenso

If, then, we would consult most effectually for our consciences, and save them from being driven about in a whirl of uncertainty, from wavering, and even stumbling at the smallest obstacle, our conviction of the truth of Scripture must be derived from a higher source than human conjectures, judgments or reasons; namely, the secret testimony

of the Spirit. It is true, indeed, that if we choose to proceed in the way of argument, it is easy to establish, by evidence of various kinds, that if there is a God in heaven, the Law, the Prophecies, and the Gospel proceedeth from Him. . . . Still, however, it is preposterous to attempt, by discussion, to rear up a full faith in Scripture. . . . Although we may maintain the Sacred Word of God against gainsayers, it does not follow that we shall forthwith implant the certainty which faith requires in their hearts. Profane men think that religion rests only on opinion, and, therefore, that they may not believe foolishly, or on slight grounds, desire and insist to have it proved by reason that Moses and the prophets were divinely inspired. But I answer, that the testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason. For as God alone can properly bear witness to His own words, so these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who spoke by the mouth of the prophets, must penetrate our hearts, in order to convince us that they faithfully delivered the message with which they were divinely entrusted. . . . Let it therefore be held as fixed, that those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture; that Scripture carrying its own evidence along with it, deigns not to submit to proofs and arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Spirit. Enlightened by Him, we no longer believe, either on our own judgment or that of others, that the Scriptures are from God; but, in a way superior to human judgment, feel perfectly assured - as much so as if we beheld the divine image visibly impressed on it - that it came to us, by the instrumentality of men, from the very mouth of God. We ask not for proofs or probabilities on which to rest our judgment, but we subject our intellect and judgment to it as too transcendent for us to estimate. This, however, we do, not in the manner in which some are wont to fasten on an unknown object, which, as soon as known, displeases, but because we have a thorough conviction that, in holding it, we hold unassailable truth; not like miserable men, whose minds are enslaved by superstition, but because we feel a divine energy living and breathing in it - an energy by which we are drawn and animated to obey it, willingly indeed, and knowingly, but more

vividly and effectually than could be done
by human will or knowledge. (I. 7.4. ff.)

In a later passage (III. 2.33) when he enlarges on
the faith principle, Calvin adopts the same course of
thought.

A simple external manifestation of the word
ought to be amply sufficient to produce faith,
did not our blindness and perverseness prevent.
But such is the proneness of our mind to
Vanity, that it can never adhere to the truth
of God, and such its dulness, that it is always
blind even in His light. Hence without the
illumination of the Spirit the Word has no
effect; and hence also it is obvious that faith
is something higher than human understanding.
Nor were it sufficient for the mind to be
illumined by the Spirit of God unless (and here
Calvin introduces a new element which we shall
consider later) the heart also were strengthened
and supported by His power.

One, out of a host of quotations from his commentaries,
will suffice. In 2.Tim. 3.16. Calvin asks concerning the
inspiration of Scripture "How can this be known?" and answers

both to disciples and to teachers, God is made
known to be the author of it by the revelation of
the same Spirit. Moses and the prophets did
not utter at random what we have received from
their hand, but speaking at the Suggestion of God,
they boldly and fearlessly testified, what was
actually true, that it was the mouth of the Lord
that spake. The same Spirit therefore who made
Moses and the prophets certain of their calling,
now also testifies to our hearts, that He has
employed them as His servants to instruct us.....
....None but those who have been enlightened by
the Holy Spirit have eyes to perceive what ought,
indeed, to have been visible to all, and yet is
visible to the elect alone.

It is quite obvious that to Calvin this secret inner testimony of the Spirit is of cardinal importance. The whole movement of the Spirit is here creative of something new; a new 'relish', a new 'sense' is constituted. There seems to be an eschatological act being done; something breaks in from beyond man and, on the supra-rational level there is conferred upon him, in the Holy Ghost, the capacity to see for himself the divinity of Scripture. It is not merely that his mind is touched so that by a process of thought he arrives at the conclusion that the Scripture is the Word of God, but he is 'opened upwards' in such a manner that spontaneously and more intuitively, he recognises it as such.

The Truth of God and the Word of God cannot be proved to be so by purely logical processes, or in terms of mere analytical propositions. Divine, living and vibrant truth is in a category of its own and calls for exclusive criteria in order to its recognition and comprehension. Reason has been described as "the capacity to behave oneself in terms of the object." In the sphere of science, when physical objects are undergoing observation and experiment, scientific categories are essential. When data and events are being studied in the realm of historical research, historical categories are necessary. Similarly, if the Scriptures move in their own orbit, then certain

correspondingly unique, 'theological' categories must be applied. Since these are not found inherently in man, they must be given him. It is in and by the Holy Spirit that these Categories are given and made effective. In a limited sense there is an eschatological repetition of the situation which obtained at the time of inspiration. A new and vital relationship, which some might describe as the hypostatic relation, is brought about, as it were, between the word now read and the Living Word originally given and eschatologically realised. This relation is constituted in and by the Witness of the Spirit. The reader, as was previously suggested in another context, is translated from the sphere of analogia entis into that of ἀναλογία πίστεως. The Holy Spirit creates for him the realm of faith, and, standing in it, he knows the Scripture as the Word of God.

It is not without some justification that Calvin's thought here has been compared with the "Will to believe" of William James. He certainly does not advocate - indeed, he positively abhors, - a mere detached or 'scientific' and spectator attitude to Scripture. Such an approach will never bring a man to the conviction that he is confronted by the Word of God. It is only as he goes into action and takes the leap of faith, - as he quits his balcony

seat - that he becomes convinced of the reality of the Word. He himself is here impelled by the Spirit. The testimony of the Spirit is no gadget fixed on to the spectacles (as the Scripture was described) to produce a kaleidoscopic effect for man's entertainment; neither is it a ready-reckoning device conveniently at man's disposal, so that he can at his pleasure total up information from the Scripture. It is rather a living power, a dynamic force. Calvin thus proposes a type of 'theological pragmatism' - but he is cautious to introduce the caveat that it is the Holy Spirit who takes the initiative. The Spirit gives His Witness, and man steps out upon it. Man is not merely a tabula rasa, passively receiving the Witness and being required to do nothing except to gloat in the exclusive possession of this new piece of furniture in the domain of his personality. The Spirit by His Witness supernaturally enriches his mind and constitutes him a believer. Throughout it all he has to realise humbly that the Witness is never at his bid and call. When the Spirit gives His secret testimony it is nothing less than God acting in sovereign grace. At the same time he can exult in the fact that the Testimony carries with it the promise of a revolutionary power, an energetic and energising principle.

In due fairness to Calvin's predecessors, however, it

should here be pointed out that he was not the first to lay stress on the Secret Testimony of the Spirit. There had been adumbrations of it, sometimes faint, sometimes clear, in Justin Martyr, Chrysostom, Hilary of Poitiers and especially Augustine; and of course it features in Luther and Zwingli. But in their writings it occurred in different and wider contexts than that of Calvin. Augustine introduces it in the larger context of his discussion of grace and the utter dependence of man upon God for salvation and for any illumination of the Word of God. He also laid greater emphasis on the Church as the custodian and interpreter of truth rather than on the Testimony of the Spirit as such. His references to the Testimony are therefore usually in the larger setting of grace and teaching.

Isolated quotations from Zwingli and Luther might convince us that they emphasised the Testimony as much as did Calvin. Jackson in his book on Zwingli writes¹

The only source of the knowledge of God, in the full and Christian sense of such a word, is therefore the 'mouth of God', by which term Zwingli designates the Bible, illuminated to the reader by the Spirit in his heart.

²
Luther wrote

Each man must believe solely because it is the Word of God and because he feels within

1). Jackson. Huldreich Zwingli, The Reformer of German Switzerland.

2). H. Grisar. Luther. Vol. IV. pp. 391, 2.

that it is true, even though an angel from heaven and all the world should preach against it.

1
And again

Thou must thyself decide. Thy life is at stake. Therefore must God say unto thee in thine heart, This is God's Word, else it is still undecided.

Most of the Reformers then, have the doctrine implicit in their teaching, but it is not in so exclusive a context as that of Calvin. Even Calvin in the first edition of his Institutes has it only in an implicit sense. In the 1539 edition, however, it is made quite explicit, namely that above^{all} else, the Testimony of the Spirit is to the divinity of the Scriptures. Henceforth it takes a cardinal place in his system and is integral to his whole thought.

Authority. The 'Secret Testimony of the Spirit' is acknowledged as one of Calvin's distinct contributions to the problem of Authority in religion. Ostensibly the position in his time would be that the external authority of the Roman Catholic Church was overthrown and a new, external authority - that of the Scripture, substituted. But this is to over-simplify matters as far as Calvin is concerned: he, at any rate, did not wish this to be the case. In theory and principle, he had a richer attitude. The Scriptures in and of themselves could not have an

1). Reyburn. John Calvin p. 351.

acknowledged and experienced authority - not even for the elect. It was only in the situation produced by the Holy Spirit that the Scriptures' authority was recognised by the believer; that it - the Word "bears upon the face of it as clear evidence of its truth, as white and black do of their colour, sweet and bitter of their taste."(I.7.2.)

The suggestion has not infrequently been put forward that the doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit has laid Christianity open to the dangers of subjectivism and that it has led ultimately, on the one hand, to the irresponsible 'enthusiasm' and individualism of the sects, and the vagaries of a 'private interpretation' more akin to licence than liberty; and on the other hand, via the Cartesian cogito ergo sum to the brazen confidence of rationalism - the ex-cathedra deliverances of Reason. It is questionable, however, to say the least, how much Calvin ought to be blamed for these subsequent developments.

His two major emphases must be taken synchronously - that is, his emphasis on the external and internal factors. A recent writer describes it well.¹ "The source of authority in general is the coerciveness of truth and the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit working together." These two are, and must be, indissolubly wedded. It is of no avail emphasising the one to the neglect or detriment of the other. Coerciveness in and of itself may signify nothing; unless it

1). R.E. Davies op. cit. p. 149

is specifically conditioned and characterised, it can be entirely misleading and false. It can be a mere parallel to an inane obedience to the injunction - "If you have nothing to say - shout!" Coerciveness expressed in passion, without unction and the sanction of Truth, is fatal.

Similarly, on the other hand, if someone (subsequent to Apostolic times) makes the extravagant claim of having infallibility conferred upon him by the Spirit, without having at the same time an objective, normative reference, he must realise that the onus of proof falls upon him.

Nevertheless, as Wheeler Robinson shows,¹ an internal authority is by no means to be decried. In fact, a wholly external authority would not be a moral and spiritual authority at all. The doctrine of the secret testimony of the Spirit is a recognition of the evidential value of religious experience. Robinson quotes Denney as saying² that

the witness of the Spirit by and with the Word in the soul does not guarantee the historicity of miraculous details, but it does guarantee the presence of a supernatural element in the history recorded. It bars out a criticism which denies the supernatural on principle and refuses to recognise a unique work of God as in process along this line.

It can also be maintained that the inner experience implied by the Testimony of the Spirit is as 'objective'

1). Wheeler Robinson. op. cit. p. 180 ff.

2). Denney. Studies in Theology. p. 212

as anything - the experience of a person in relation to God is as objectively real as anything else in the universe.

There are, of course, precautionary measures to be taken against experiences masquerading as the experience of the Testimony of the Holy Spirit. We must beware of the danger of equating the effect of the Testimony of the Spirit with 'what makes the most vivid emotional appeal,' or with what 'most accords with our deep-rooted assumptions,' or, in Coleridge's idiom, with "whatever finds us " in our reading of Scripture.¹ Calvin certainly could not away with such sophistications. We cannot be sure how far he would agree with the description of the 'Testimony' as

a religious stirring of the human heart - a becoming aware of an intense personal meaning which affects the whole course of our lives.... that which we know to be true is religiously appropriated to make a vital determining factor which evokes a personal response of trust and obedience.

It is easy to be open to the temptation of going beyond, and reading in to, what Calvin said about the Testimony of the Spirit. But although he emphasised the value of the 'Testimony' especially in relation to the divinity of the Bible, there is in his treatment a description of the noetic aspect of regeneration. It appears that there is more in his doctrine of the Inner Witness than merely an act of authentication. That may

1). Cunliffe-Jones. "Authority of the Biblical Revelation" p. 96.

certainly have been the primary thing; but there is more to it than that, and Calvin seems to be holding back, and to be satisfied with veiled pointers towards what he will enlarge upon later. We have already met with some of these in the passages quoted from his 'Institutes' (I. 7.4. and I. 8.13) where he makes reference to the 'certainty which faith requires,' to 'confirming the faith of the godly', to the production of a 'firm' and 'sound faith' and a 'saving knowledge of God' and the fixing 'in men's hearts that assurance which is essential to true piety.' The authentication of the divinity of the Scriptures then, as we have seen, is not a handy addition which can be conveniently discarded at the pleasure of the reader, but rather, as produced in the Holy Spirit, it constitutes a new attitude to God and must be vitally concerned with God in Christ - to whom the Scriptures uniquely bear witness. The truth of the Scriptures are known only to those who have faith. 'Justly,' says Calvin, 'does Augustine remind us, that every man who would have understanding in such high matters must previously possess piety and mental peace.'

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Cunliffe-Jones has something similar to this in mind when he says that "the Bible produces its true work of inspiration in our hearts when we come to it as the

1). Cunliffe-Jones. op. cit. p. 94.

witness to the Divine revelation in Christ Jesus, not because we look in it to find things which appeal to us at any particular time." He also advocates the application of a pragmatic test to the Testimony of the Holy Spirit - at least to claims made in its respect. It should be tested by its Gospel-illumination of the life of the claimant - by their fruits ye shall know them! It must also be beyond doubt that the objective truth and Validity of the Gospel is presupposed.

We can be quite sure that Calvin's doctrine of the 'Testimony' would stand up to these pragmatic tests; but apart from these, we can see that he quite obviously avoids any 'solipsistic subjectivism'. For him, the man who successfully comes to the Scriptures, is a concrete personality, - a conscious knower who is objectively real. At the same time the Scripture - the Word of God, which he approaches, is also there objectively, and then also the Holy Spirit is present in an objective sense - transcendently real yet working immanently. Calvin does not tolerate the idea that it is some vague, indefinable something in man that responds to the divinity of the objective revelation in which the Scripture consists. It is not man's spirit, previously latent and dormant but now revived and active, that in and of itself recognises the divine authority of Scripture. It is rather the Spirit Himself, who working

immanently, bears His witness in and by the Word.

R.E. Davies¹ well shows that there is in this a significant suggestion of a theory of authority which includes the three elements involved in all knowing, namely "the human knower, the object known, and the Divine Spirit who alone makes knowledge possible."

The Holy Spirit thus working immanently in man by and with His Word, constitutes an authority for man, not only as an individual in his personal life and relationships, but also in the ecclesiastical context and in the wider sphere of the State.

Some scholars urge that it is regrettable that Calvin laid more emphasis on the objective authority of the Word and virtually by-passed, in actual practice, the authority of the Holy Spirit as such. But is it correct to make this out to be the case? Have we not seen that Calvin lays down firmly the doctrine of the secret Testimony of the Spirit? In our treatment of his approach to, and use of, the Scriptures, we must, in all fairness to him, continually assume this to be a substratum. It may not obtrude itself, any more than does the foundation of a building - or better, the root of a living tree; but its presence is indispensable and intensely relevant.

, The discussion of the subject of the relation of the .

Holy Spirit to authority and guidance and kindred topics will be resumed and enlarged upon in our consideration of the relation between Calvin and subsequent thinkers, notably those from among the Puritans and Quakers. We can close this section in no better manner than by emulating¹ Dakin in his quotation from Mackintosh

It is misleading to say that the secret and inspiration of the new evangelical message was the right of private judgment, which is in no sense a distinctively religious idea; nor is this secret to be found either in the affirmation of the immediate access of the soul to God, which can hardly be denied to great saints like St. Bernard. Actually it lay in a new thought of the intrinsic authority belonging to God's revelation of Himself. It was the discovery that unless Jesus Christ attests Himself to the soul in whom His Word has been made living and powerful by the Holy Spirit, the Christian religion cannot be made to live. In consequence the Reformers taught that, the believer being face to face with God, his convictions are reached by responsible decision, in the spontaneous act of faith. They are the Spirit-prompted response of his mind and heart to the Word. They are convictions which God leaves him no option but to hold..... a new principle for theology had been introduced, namely, that truth revealed in Christ admits of no external proof, but is made the inward possession of the believing mind by the convincing power of the Holy Spirit.

1). Mackintosh H.R.M. Types of Modern Theology.
pp. 6-7.

(iii) The Holy Spirit and Interpretation.

There is no escaping the tenacious grip in which Calvin holds us. Unflatteringly he has constrained us to realise that the Scripture, despite its unparalleled excellence in the field of revelational literature, does not, and cannot, impinge upon us really as the Word of God, and we are not fully convinced as to its divinity and authority, until the Holy Spirit bears His witness in our hearts. But lest the over-ambitious reader, exulting in the witness of the Spirit, should advance with confident step into the labyrinth of the revelation, bidding adieu, as it were, at the threshold, to the Spirit, Calvin lays his firm hand upon him. The secrets of the Word of God and its inner meaning will remain in utter obscurity apart from the further illumination and interpretation of the Holy Spirit. He, the Author and Inspirer of the Word, is alone able to interpret it and disentangle it and apply it to the modern situation of the reader.

When we come to hear the sermon or take up the Bible, warns Calvin, we must not have the foolish arrogance of thinking that we shall easily understand everything we hear or read. But we must come with reverence, we must wait entirely upon God, knowing that we need to be taught by His Holy Spirit, and that without Him we cannot understand anything that is shown us in His Word. ¹

Commenting on 2.Peter 1.20 "that no prophecy of the

1). Opus.L111, p. 300.

Scripture is of any private interpretation," he says that

then only are the prophecies read profitably, when we renounce the mind and feelings of the flesh, and submit to the teaching of the Spirit, but that it is an impious profanation of it, when we arrogantly rely on our own acumen, deeming that sufficient to enable us to understand it, though the mysteries contain things hidden from our flesh and sublime treasures of life far surpassing our capacities.

In this matter, of course, Calvin takes his stand beside many other renowned champions of the Spirit as the Supreme Interpreter. Luther in no uncertain terms had stated that "no one can rightly understand God or the Word of God unless he receives it directly from the Holy Ghost."¹ In the following century George Fox declared that

the holy Scriptures were given forth by the Spirit of God and all people must come to the Spirit of God in themselves (Calvin would have cautioned Fox at this point) in order to know God and Christ, of whom the prophets and Apostles learnt; and by the same Spirit all men may know the holy Scriptures. For as the Spirit of God was in them that gave forth the Scriptures, so the same Spirit must be in all them that come to understand the Scriptures.²

Moving into the next century again, and into another non-Calvinist sphere, we find Charles Wesley epitomising the conception in

Come, Holy Ghost, for moved by Thee
Thy prophets wrote and spoke;
Unlock the truth, Thyself the key,
Unseal the sacred book.

1). Grisar. op. cit. Vol. IV. p.392

2). George Fox. An Autobiography pp. 176,7.

Calvin exhibits no aristocracy in his attitude in this context. No one has the monopoly of the Spirit. He is available to the humblest reader and the most literate alike. The Spirit will lead all who study the Word, and seek His help, into a higher emancipation and education. Incidentally it is noteworthy that one of Calvin's express aims in composing his 'Institutes' was to provide the ordinary student of the Scriptures with, as it were, hand-rails and sign-posts that he might have "guidance and direction, as to what he ought to look for in them, that he might not wander up and down, but pursue a certain path, and so attain the end to which the Holy Spirit invites him."

No one is more concerned than Calvin to show that the presence and power and indispensability of the Holy Spirit does not put a premium on indolence on man's side. Man's mind, illumined by the Holy Spirit, must be intensely active and apply itself diligently and with due intelligence to the Word.

Calvin believes that he can rely on the Spirit for help both in understanding - in the sense of arriving at - the text, and in interpreting the text. Calvin never assumes that the Spirit had erred or had allowed error when He inspired the original authors of Scripture. If mistakes are present

1). 'Subject of the Present Work' Prefixed to French Edition, Published at Geneva, 1545.

in the extant texts, they must be attributed to copyists' errors. This is what he means in his commentary on Matthew Ch. 1. in reference to the omission of the names of three kings: "They who say that this has been done through forgetfulness (i.e. of the original writer) are by no means to be listened to."

Similarly with regard to discrepancies in the matter of names as in Matthew 27.9. "How the name of Jeremiah crept in I confess," admits Calvin, "that I do not know, nor do I anxiously trouble myself; certainly the name Jeremiah has been put by an error (i.e. of the copyist's) for Zechariah the thing itself shows; for nothing like this is read in Jeremiah." And in the comment on Acts 7.16 we read "It is well known that there is an error in the name Abraham....wherefore this place is to be corrected."

These emendations found here in Calvin are adumbrations of what later developed into the modern exercise of textual criticism. Having then arrived at and established the text at the Spirit's directions, what canons of interpretation does Calvin adopt and apply? What course does the Spirit advise him to follow in the interpretation of the text with which he is presented?

There are certain basic presuppositions with which he is obliged to be furnished as he approaches the Scriptures if he

is to gain any real insight into them or derive any lasting benefit therefrom - and especially if he is to have the audacity to seek the Spirit's help. One of these fundamental tenets, as has appeared quite obviously from Calvin's writings, is that the Scripture, in toto, is the Word of God to man: God's revelation or self-manifestation to man, and at the same time a disclosure of man's identity and nature and need, and of the possibility of and grounds for, a renewed and redeemed relationship between man and God. The Bible then, as the Word of God, is primarily a religious book and not expressly a scientific textbook or handbook for secular history or an exhaustive, universal "Enquire Within." Calvin by no means admits that it is silent or false, irrelevant or negligible in regard to the data of these latter spheres of learning, but his contention is that the Bible tells us all we need to know about God, and that the knowledge it contains is absolutely adequate for our moral and spiritual welfare in this world and our eternal salvation and destiny. It is, in the Spirit's hand, the unrivalled textbook for the faith and practice of all men.

The Bible certainly seems to observe an eloquent silence on truths, events and conditions about which the natural man would welcome more information. Calvin here commands the reader to observe a corresponding 'reverent agnosticism,'

and not to be too inquisitive and presumptuous where the Bible is reticent in its speech and reluctant to give data. For instance, in considering the chronological harmony of Matthew 5.1. and Luke 6.20, where no mention is made of the time of our Lord's discourse, Calvin says that "in preserving the order of time, which I saw was neglected by the Spirit of God, I did not wish to be too curious." The Holy Spirit thus produces humility and a due resignation to the revelation as it stands.

Our wisdom ought to be nothing else than to embrace in gentle docility, and without any exception, whatever is handed down to us in the Sacred Scriptures. (I.18.4).....From this arises the beginning of true intelligence, when we reverently embrace what God there wishes to testify about Himself. (I.6.2)...For again, the Scriptures are the school of the Holy Spirit, in which nothing is omitted which it is necessary and useful to know, and nothing is taught except what it is of advantage to know. (III.21.3.)

If we are to be obedient to and dependent upon the Spirit we must receive simply what it yields to us and we must beware lest we impose upon or infuse into Scripture our own private renderings. Calvin at the end of his life of prolific scriptural study and writing made no small claim, namely that he had not consciously or deliberately twisted a single passage of Scripture.

Calvin rested as confidently in the law of uniformity

of the Spirit in Scripture as any normal person would abide in the daily rising of the sun. It would never enter his mind that the Spirit would ever contradict Himself. The Spirit

wishes us to recognise Him by the image which He has stamped on the Scriptures. The author of the Scriptures cannot vary, and change His likeness. Such as He there appeared at first, such He will perpetually remain. There is nothing contumelious to Him in this, unless we are to think it would be honourable for Him to degenerate, and revolt against Himself. (I.9.2.)

The practical implication of this for Calvin, is that scripture must be compared with Scripture, and if due diligence and patience and perseverance is observed, then the truth will emerge. There is for him no better interpreter or commentator on one part of Scripture than another part, lit up by the Spirit of God. This procedure will also serve to preclude any indulgence in too naïve and sophisticated allegorisation and spiritualising of the text of the Word. Furthermore, when, for the moment, seemingly insurmountable difficulties and discrepancies present themselves, Calvin is the first to admit that this is due to our ignorance and blindness, rather than to any insoluble poser in the objective instrument of the Spirit itself, and his attitude differs in no whit from that of true scientific researchers in any other field, namely that of

"Wait and see."

To Calvin another governing principle is that the Old and New Testaments, coming from the Holy Spirit, are alike the Word of God, forming an indissoluble unity. He admits that not every single word in both these Testaments, or in the Word as a whole, tends to faith and that "since the heart of man is not brought to faith by every word of God, we must still consider what it is that faith properly has respect to in the Word." (III.2.7.) Nevertheless he is convinced that every part of the Word is inspired and that the Spirit can bring out the hidden meaning and the lustre, in its total setting, of the most beclouded of texts. Many modern commentators find him lacking in an organic sense of "progressive revelation," and yet he would say that, in a real sense, he finds in the Word the Holy Spirit unfolding gradually and progressively the drama of man's life in relation to God. Although he takes verses from the Old Testament and applies them in the context of New Testament conceptions in a way repugnant, to some modern scholars; and although he is accused by some of manipulating isolated proof-texts, and indiscriminately thrusting them upon a framework that will not bear their weight, Calvin nevertheless desires to show that, in some sense, the Old and the New Testaments are on

a different plane. In the economy of God, he says, and in respect of the mode of administration and the method of presenting the truth, the Old Testament is on a 'lower' - an 'inferior' level than the New. In substance and ultimate reality they are one and the same, but the Old Testament is 'adapted to a lower stage of development.'
(II.10.2.)

The Holy Spirit, Calvin claims, has two distinct dispensations in the Old and the New Testaments. The points of similarity and difference, of likeness and contrast are quite obvious. The respects in which the two Testaments concur appear in the context of the conceptions about God's covenant and the future life. Calvin shows that, in the main there are three instances of similarity. In terms of God's Covenant he says that first, the Old Testament saints were given the hope of immortality. Secondly, that the mercy of God was the sole ground and fountain-head of this hope. And thirdly, that it was already recognised by them that Christ was the only 'Mediator by whom they were united to God and made capable of receiving His promises.'
(II.10.2.)

The differences between the two Testaments, following the line of the distinction in the economy of the Spirit, are five. (a) The Old Testament saints had the hope of immortality portrayed to them in terms of earthly blessings,

while in the New Testament they are presented as heavenly and supra-mundane. (b) The truth in the one is delivered by means of 'types' while the 'reality' itself is acclaimed in the other. (c) The former were fettered to the letter, to the ministry of death beneath the canopy of a curse, and to what was, at best, transient and wraith-like. The latter had the Spirit coursing through its veins, imparting and sustaining life in every part, - life enduring eternally. (d) The one cannot but elicit fear and trembling, having judgment ominously hovering above it; the second pulsates with joy and liberty. (e) The Old jealously guarded its exclusive privileges, - blessings earmarked for the Jews: the New throws open its portals to 'whosoever believeth.' (II.11.1-11.)

Calvin, we see makes copious use of what is known as the 'theory of Accommodation,' namely that the Holy Spirit paid due regard to the elementary and puerile character of the Old Testament nations and to their lack of understanding and insight and maturity. He had to speak, as it were, in monosyllables, in a way similar to that used by a patient mother to her small child. Calvin's words on John. 12.16 could be applied to the larger sphere of the early revelation "Let us remember that it is a special favour of the Holy Spirit to instruct us in a gradual manner, that we may not be stupid in considering the works of God." This theory of

the Spirit's accommodating Himself and the truth of God to the capacity of man, serves to answer two objections commonly raised, and to 'justify the ways of God to man.'

In the light of the theory of Accommodation, first, God need not be irreverently thought of as mutable, - variable in His Will and its performance. The variant in the situation is the capacity of man; the constant is the Spirit in His Eternal Character. Secondly, it obviates the question why God did not reveal the whole gamut of revelation en bloc. The content, extent and intensity of the Holy Spirit's revelation depends ultimately on the sovereign will of God who addressed Himself to man in his concrete historical situation.

The theory, moreover, directs us in our approach to, and our recognition of, the abiding and binding elements in the earlier dispensation of the Spirit, especially in regard to the Law. Calvin distinguishes three strands in the Mosaic Law - the ceremonial, the judicial and the moral. The first two were transitory and obligatory only upon the Jews in the pre-Christian era and were designed to have an 'interim' function in the realms of worship and government. The third, - the moral strand, however, is relevant at all times and inescapable, and applicable by the Holy Spirit to the believer even in the Christian age. Calvin is careful to show that this in no way derogates from

the authority, as such, of the ceremonial and judicial portions, but that a distinction must be drawn between those who have to submit to their authority as over against that of the moral sections.

Calvin's supreme, governing concept, however, in his attitude through the Spirit to the Scriptures is that from its Alpha to its Omega, the Word of God written is a witness to the Word of God Incarnate. From the time of that "First night outside Paradise" when (as it is conceived by the artist of the famous Paris picture of that name) the night sky contained the form of the Cross, until the Spirit and the Bride say "Come," the revelation of the Spirit focusses its spotlight on Christ. The Word is the unique witness to Christ, and the Holy Spirit unceasingly directs our attention to Him. Moreover, not only is the Word the unique record of the revelation of Christ through the Spirit, but ^{it} is itself that revelation and the means whereby the Spirit brings us to God through Christ.

The Word stands erect in its completeness, proud in its finality, but, under the Holy Spirit, vibrant in its contemporaneousness, and in the vanguard of the Spirit's loving confrontation and invitation to man in every age. Truly can it be said with Lindsay that "In Bible history,

1). Lindsay T.M. "A History of the Reformation"
Vol. 1. p. 453.

as the Reformers conceived it, we hear two voices - the voice of God speaking love to man, and the voice of the renewed man answering in faith to God. This communion is no dead thing belonging to a bygone past; it may be shared here and now."

CHAPTER IV

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE INDIVIDUAL

1. SALVATION IN CHRIST

CHAPTER IV

The Holy Spirit and the Individual

1. Salvation in Christ

(a) The objective ground of salvation

Down the ages, sage and plebeian alike have enquired and searched diligently for the key to divine history and the salvation of men; along highways and byways they have sought pointers towards, and the actual reality of, the deliverance which they feel must be available for man in his dilemma of life, in the inglorious condition into which his fettered and corrupted will has led him. As they have walked down the avenues of Scripture and peered expectantly into, and tarried awhile, in some of its arbours, they have seen the variegated means used by the Spirit of revelation to herald the coming of Him Who, in the fulness of time, would come from beyond history and condescend to domicile Himself in space and time.

A wistful longing, and, at times, a passionate desire, had been nurtured in the human heart and, especially in the heart of God's people. The story was a long and rich one of how the prophets had been directed by the Spirit to promulgate and elucidate the law which, at one and the same time, had proffered such promises of life and salvation and had accentuated the gnawing consciousness that it was outwith the reach of sinful, mortal men. Then there had been the formidable and intricate paraphernalia of sacrifice and worship, the priests who ministered them being themselves as much in subjection to them as the people. Then again there

appeared that long line of kings, some good, some evil, each seeking and many destroying a kingdom.

All this, however, was not without its set purpose. It was the great event casting its shadow before it. The Law with its lofty, snowy peaks of purity was to find its perfect fulfilment; the prophecies in regard to this were not mistaken. The slaughter of a thousand lambs from a thousand hills was not meaningless; the priests would be vindicated when a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world would be visibly sacrificed. David's sceptre and the crowns of kings were not legendary and illusory but indicative of a Kingdom which would know no frontiers.

Thus the prophet via the Law, the priest via his sacrifices, and the king via his nation, each severally, and all together, through their substantial incompleteness and failure before God, demonstrated the absolute necessity for a supra-human salvation.

It was manifest that nothing short of God's own coming in the Person of a Mediator - One who would be both God and man - could effect that salvation. This is exactly what happens in Christ. "God in His infinite mercy, having determined to redeem us, became Himself our redeemer in the person of His only begotten Son." (II.12.2.) In Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One has appeared, uniting in His own Person and perfecting the three-fold office of Prophet, Priest and King. In a sense of course He is, as the Christ, these three at every stage of His earthly life, but He exhibits them pre-

eminently in His Incarnation, Death and Resurrection, respectively. In each case the Holy Spirit bears an integral relation to Him.

It is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit to perform the 'Anointing' on the Chosen One of God, and this anointing features in connection with each of the three offices, in a wider and a narrower sense. In the wider sense it is present at the very birth of this Supreme Prophet of God's will.

Upon the Incarnation of the Son of God, and particularly at the time of the Annunciation, the angelic message to Mary the Virgin is "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee".¹ Calvin tells us that

The angel does not explain the manner, so as to satisfy curiosity... He only leads the Virgin to contemplate the power of the Holy Spirit and to surrender silently and calmly to His guidance... 'Shall come upon', denotes that this would be an extraordinary work, in which natural means have no power... The operation of the Spirit would be secret, as if an intervening cloud did not permit it to be beheld by the eyes of men.

At the same time the Spirit was attending to Joseph and exerting a restraining influence upon him, who

moved by an ardent love of justice, condemned the crime of which he supposed his wife to have been guilty; while the gentleness of his disposition prevented him from going to the utmost rigour of the law... Nor ought we to have any hesitation in believing, that his mind was restrained by a secret inspiration of the Spirit.²

This was further implemented by a dream in which a divine

¹ Lk. 1.35. ² C. Mth. 1.19.

message was given to Joseph. Calvin reminds us¹ that "the dreams which come from God are accompanied by the testimony of the Spirit who puts beyond a doubt that it is God who speaks".

The Holy Spirit took such care of every detail of this tremendous event in world history, upon the advent of this Holy Child, because in no other way could the undefiled Son of God be born.

It is trifling (says Calvin, (II.13.4.)) to maintain that if Christ is free from all taint and was begotten of the Seed of Mary, by the secret operation of the Spirit, it is not therefore the seed of the woman that is impure, but only that of the man. We do not hold Christ to be free from all taint, merely because He was born of a woman unconnected with a man, but because He was sanctified by the Spirit, so that the generation was pure and spotless, such as it would have been before Adam's fall.

In all this the Spirit is working with a specific end in view.

The truth of His human nature is not inconsistent with His deriving peculiar honour above all others from His divine generation, having been conceived out of the ordinary way of nature by the Holy Spirit... It was necessary in order to His cleansing others, that He should be free from every spot and blemish. Though Christ was formed of the seed of Abraham, yet He contracted no defilement from a sinful nature; for the Spirit of God kept Him pure from the very commencement, and this was done not merely that He might abound in personal holiness, but chiefly that He might sanctify His own people. The manner of conception therefore assures us that we have a Mediator separate from sinners.²

It is, however, at our Lord's Baptism that the 'anointing proper' for the Prophet's office takes place. "Christ so far

¹ C. Mt. 1.20. ² C. Lk. 1.35.

as He was man received from it additional certainty as to His heavenly calling... When He commenced a warfare of so arduous a description He needed to be armed with a remarkable power of the Spirit."¹

Calvin at this point asks three questions about the Spirit. First, Why did the Spirit who had formerly dwelt in Christ descend upon Him at that time?

He answers that

Though the grace of the Spirit was bestowed on² Christ in a remarkable and extraordinary manner yet He remained at home as a private person, till He should be called to public life by the Father. Now that the full time is come for preparing to discharge the office of Redeemer, He is clothed with a new power of the Spirit, and that not so much for His own sake as for the sake of others... that believers might learn to receive, and to contemplate with reverence, His divine power, and that the weakness of the flesh might not make Him despised... Baptism was an appendage to the Gospel and therefore it began at the same time with the preaching of the Gospel. When John beholds the Holy Spirit descending upon Christ, it is to remind him that nothing carnal or earthly must be expected in Christ, but that He comes as a man filled with God, descended from heaven, in whom the power of the Holy Spirit reigns. We know that He is God manifested in the flesh, but even in His character as a servant, and in His human nature, there is a heavenly power to be considered.³

Calvin's second question is "Why did the Holy Spirit appear in the shape of a dove, rather than in that of fire?" The answer is that it shows "the mildness of Christ, by which He kindly and gently called, and every day invites, sinners to the hope of salvation..." "...a token of the sweetest consolation, that we may not fear to approach to Christ, who

¹ C. Ath. 3.16.

² Jn. 3.34.

³ Ibid.

meets us, not in the formidable power of the Spirit, but clothed with gentle and lovely grace."

Thirdly, "How could John see the Holy Spirit?" To this Calvin replies that

Though He is in Himself invisible, yet He is spoken of as beheld, when He exhibits any visible sign of His presence. John did not see the essence of the Spirit...nor His power...but...the appearance of a dove, under which God showed the presence of His Spirit.

Immediately after this 'anointing', the Spirit led Christ into the Wilderness where He was tempted. "Let us therefore learn that by the guidance of the Spirit Christ withdrew from the crowd of men, in order that He might come forth as the highest teacher of the Church, as the Ambassador of God; as sent from heaven." By the Temptation

God intended...to exhibit in the Person of His Son, as in a very bright mirror, how obstinately and perseveringly Satan opposes the salvation of men... But if Christ was tempted as the public representative of all believers let us learn that the temptations which befall us are not accidental or regulated by the will of Satan, without God's permission, but that the Spirit of God presides over our contests as an exercise of our faith.¹

Luke 4.1 records that 'Jesus was full of the Holy Ghost'. "We know that Christ was fortified by such a power of the Spirit that the darts of Satan could not pierce or wound Him: that is, that it was impossible for sin to fall upon Him."²

From John 3.34 we learn that 'God giveth not the Spirit by measure'. Calvin applies this to our Lord and links it up

¹ C. Eth. 4.1.

² French Trans.

with the words 'the Father hath given all things into the hand of His Son, because He loveth Him'.

The verb in the present tense - 'giveth' - denotes, as it were, a continued act; for though Christ was all at once endued with the Spirit in the highest perfection, yet, as He continually flows, as it were, from a source, and is widely diffused, there is no impropriety in saying that Christ now receives Him from the Father... The Spirit was not given to Christ by measure, as if the power of¹ grace which He possesses were in any way limited.

Of the 'Messianic' reference in Isaiah 11.2,² 'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him', Calvin remarks

We must keep in view...that this refers to Christ's human nature; because He could not be enriched with the gift and grace of the Father except so far as He became man. Besides, as He came down to us, so He received the gifts of the Spirit that He might bestow them upon us. And this is the anointing from which He receives the name of Christ, which He imparts to us; for why are we called Christians, but because He admits us to His fellowship, by distributing to us out of His fulness according to the measure of undeserved liberality... The gifts of the Spirit are laid up in Him...that we may go to Him to obtain whatever we want.

Increasingly during His time on earth our Lord by lip and life, through pardoning and healing, demonstrated the presence and power of the Spirit. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me' could not have been said in exactly this manner by anyone else.

Christ...does nothing by the suggestion or advice of men, but everything by the guidance of the Spirit of God... The next clause, 'because He hath anointed me,' is added by way of explanation. Many make a false boast, that they have the Spirit of God, while they are destitute of His gifts: but Christ proves by the anointing, as the effect, that He is endued with the Spirit of God.³

¹ C. John 3.34.

² Commentary.

³ C. Lk. 4.18.

Thus in Christ's Person and preaching by word and deed

We see that He was anointed by the Spirit to be a herald and witness of His Father's grace, and not in the usual way; for He is distinguished from other teachers who had a similar office. And here, again, it is to be observed, that the unction which He received in order to perform the office of teacher, was not for Himself, but for His whole body, that a corresponding efficacy of the Spirit might always accompany the preaching of the Gospel. (II.15.2.)

Not only, however, was Christ anointed as Prophet but He received by the Spirit a special unction for His work as the High Priest of our souls. Although His spiritually sacerdotal function extended throughout His life and was indicated by His obedience in the Spirit to the divine will at every point, and His being sanctified through His identification with human suffering, the fulfilment of the Priestly office occurs supremely at His death. As both Priest and Sacrifice, Christ through the love of God, removes the enmity between God and man, effecting reconciliation, bearing in Himself the full weight of the reaction of God's holiness to human sin. It was not the outward physical outpouring of the life-blood in death, in and of itself, that achieved the end, but the fact that Christ 'through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God'.

Christ's death (says Calvin) is to be estimated, not by the external act, but by the power of the Spirit. For Christ suffered as man; but that death becomes saving to us through the efficacious power of the Spirit; for a sacrifice, which was to be an eternal expiation was a work more than human. And he calls the Spirit eternal for this reason, that we may know that the reconciliation of which He is the worker or effector, is eternal.¹

¹ C. Heb. 9.14.

Moreover, the completeness of the death and the intensity and extent of the Passion is indicated in the credal reference to Christ's 'descent into Hell', where, by the Spirit, He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which, Calvin maintains, means at least that Christ bore, not only in His body, but "in His soul, the tortures of condemned and ruined man". By Christ's accomplishment through the Spirit, the fears and power of death are dispelled and, as is shown later, the earthly life can be the scene of the mortification of the flesh. Neither does His Priestly function cease, inasmuch as He continues, together with the Spirit, as the perpetual Intercessor (II.15.6.) guaranteeing the efficacy of our prayers.

But if His power was manifested in the ignominy and seeming defeat of His Cross, how much more so in the triumph of His Resurrection. It is in His rising from the dead, and its consequences, that His regal dignity becomes manifest and His office of King becomes prominent. The Spirit, as we have seen, anointed Him to His prophetic and priestly offices and

His royal unction is not set before us as composed of oil or aromatic perfumes; but He is called the Christ of God, because 'the Spirit of the Lord' rested upon Him; 'the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' This is the oil of joy with which the Psalmist declares that 'He was anointed above His fellows'.

The kingdom had indeed come at His advent, and the sway of His royal sceptre had been partially in evidence when, in the power of the Spirit, He had 'with the finger of God cast out devils and showed His sovereignty over disease and sin'. (Lk.11.20.)

But the Spirit's vindication of His kingly rank accompanied His resurrection in a peculiar manner. Calvin tells us in Romans 1.4 that

Christ was declared the Son of God by openly exercising a real celestial power, that is, the power of the Spirit, when He rose from the dead; but that this power is comprehended when a conviction of it is imprinted on our hearts by the same Spirit... Spirit of Holiness...as far as it sanctifies, confirms and ratifies that evidence of its power which it once exhibited in raising the Holy One and reproducing in us the holiness of the Risen Christ.

In this quotation a number of new elements enter to which we shall return later. We may note, however, that through the Resurrection, the Ascension and Session at God's right hand and the sending of the Holy Spirit, the Kingship of Christ is delineated quite clearly as spiritual, inward and, in the ultimate sense, future and eternal. Believers are reminded by the Spirit when they pass through tribulation and suffering in this present world "that the Kingdom of Christ consists in the Spirit, and not in earthly delights or pomp, and that hence, in order to be partakers with Him, we must renounce the world".

'The Kingdom of God is within you'¹ and is 'righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost'.² By the Spirit we know that

Christ enriches His people with all things necessary to the eternal salvation of their souls... He reigns more for us than for Himself, and that both within us and without us; that being replenished, in so far as God knows to be expedient, with the gifts of the Spirit, of which we are naturally destitute, we

¹ Lk. 17.21.

² Rom. 14.17.

may feel from their first fruits, that we are truly united to God for perfect blessedness; and then trusting to the power of that same Spirit, may not doubt that we shall always be victorious against the devil, the world, and every thing that can do us harm...in what regards the heavenly life, there is not a drop of vigour in us save what the Holy Spirit instils, who has chosen His seat in Christ.
(II.15.5.)

Not only does the Spirit 'choose His seat in Christ', but Christ chooses to be present in His Eternal Spirit . On John 16.7 Calvin says

For more advantageous and desirable is that presence of Christ by which He communicates Himself to us through the grace and power of His Spirit than if He were present before our eyes. And here we must not put the question, 'Could not Christ have drawn down the Holy Spirit while he dwelt on earth?' For Christ takes for granted all that had been decreed by the Father;...to dispute about what is possible would be foolish and pernicious.

It is the same Christ then who, by the Spirit is present on earth, is seated on the regal throne and is the guarantor of the possession of the kingdom for His subjects; He is their advocate before the Father, and causes them continually to be victorious. It is He who can quicken us to spiritual life, sanctify us by His Spirit, and adorn His Church with various graces and by his protection preserve it from harm (II.16.16.) until the Day when He shall administer Judgment.

The whole sum of our salvation then is grounded on and bounded by Christ.

If we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus that He possesses it; if we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, we shall find them in His unction; strength in His government; purity in His

conception; indulgence in His nativity, in which He was made like us in all respects, in order that He might learn to sympathise with us: if we seek redemption, we shall find it in His passion; acquittal in His condemnation; remission of the curse in His cross; satisfaction in His sacrifice; purification in His blood; reconciliation in His descent to hell; mortification of the flesh in His sepulchre; newness of life in His resurrection; immortality also in His resurrection; the inheritance of a celestial kingdom in His entrance into heaven; protection, security, and the abundant supply of all blessings, in His kingdom; secure anticipation of judgment in the power of judgment committed to Him. Since then in Him all kinds of blessings are treasured up, let us draw a full supply from Him, and none from any other quarter.

(II.16.19.)

(b) The Appropriation of Salvation

What an unmitigated tragedy and abysmal cruelty it would be if man were told, having been informed of the ineffable benefits laid up in Christ, that there were no means of their being possessed by him. What anguish of soul and poignancy of spirit would ensue were he to hear that despite the forgiveness, the reconciliation, the inexhaustible regenerating resources vested in the Incarnate, Crucified, Risen, Ascended and Eternally Reigning Redeemer, all these were outwith his reach, meant to be contemplated at a safe distance, but never to be participated in. What a sardonic grin would life wear on its face, what sadism would it present, were the so-called treasures of Christ preserved as museum-pieces, eternally labelled 'not to be touched'!

This, however, says Calvin, would be precisely the case, were it not for the Holy Spirit. Apart from Him, "the blessings which God has bestowed on His only-begotten Son, not for private use, but to enrich the poor and needy", would leave the latter cold and as paupers. Man would remain a Dives, gazing in pathos across a yawning gulf fixed between him and the bliss of Abraham's bosom, with an unbridgeable chasm stretching between his need and the only supply. He would unceasingly be haunted by the thought that somewhere, beyond his horizon, or worse still, on the ever-receding horizon, there was wasting, the very thing he needed. Every reminder of Christ and His riches would merely serve to intensify his pain.

So long as we are without Christ and separated from Him nothing which He suffered and did for the salvation of the human race is of the least benefit to us. To communicate to us the blessings which He received from the Father, He must become ours and dwell in us...all which He possesses being nothing to us until we become one with Him.
(III.1.1.)

How terrible it is to think of God's lavish love and 'prodigal provision' being shelved, and that "Christ is in a manner unemployed, because we view Him coldly without us, and so at a distance from us". This is exactly what happens until the Holy Spirit graciously goes into operation and appears in the role of "the bond by which Christ effectually binds us to Himself". Then there is in evidence "the secret efficacy of the Spirit, to which it is owing that we enjoy Christ and all His blessings..." (III.1.1.) "...for it is by the Spirit alone that He unites Himself to us." (III.1.3.)

Moreover the testimony of the Spirit is engraven on our hearts by way of seal, and thus seals the cleansing and sacrifice of Christ, (because) if the shedding of His sacred blood is not to be in vain, our souls must be washed in it by the secret cleansing of the Holy Spirit.

We have already seen that Christ Himself

came provided with the Holy Spirit after a peculiar manner, namely that He might separate us from the world, and unite us in the hope of an eternal inheritance. Hence the Spirit is called the Spirit of sanctification, because He quickens and cherishes us...and is the seed and root of heavenly life in us.

He is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, 'abundantly poured out' in the Kingdom of Christ and characterising Christ Himself as "a quickening Spirit" and establishing His own "communion" "...without which no man shall ever taste the paternal favour

of God, or the benefits of Christ." (III.1.3.)

He so breathes divine life into us, that we are no longer acted upon by ourselves, but ruled by His motion and agency, so that everything good in us is the fruit of His grace, while our endowments without Him are mere darkness of mind and perverseness of heart. (III.1.3.)

It is perfectly obvious then, that man is helplessly and hopelessly dependent upon the Holy Spirit in whose hand lies the initiative as regards the application of the redemption wrought in Christ. Flesh and blood can avail nothing; the Spirit alone

is the internal teacher by whose agency the promise of salvation, which would otherwise only strike the air or our ears, penetrates into our minds... For in vain were light offered to the blind, did not that Spirit of understanding open the intellectual eye; so that He Himself may be properly termed the key by which the treasures of the heavenly kingdom are unlocked, and His illumination, the eye of the mind by which we are enabled to see... Therefore, as...salvation is perfected in the person of Christ, so, in order to make us partakers of it, He baptizes us 'with the Holy Spirit, and with fire',¹ enlightening us into the faith of His Gospel, and so regenerating us to be new creatures. Thus cleansed from all pollution, He dedicates us as holy temples to the Lord. (III.1.4.)

(i) The Spirit and Faith

Calvin is not so jealous for the objective character of the salvation and of the initiative and sum-total work of the Spirit of God in applying this salvation to the individual, as completely to neglect and disparage the human aspect. In his discussion of the relation of the Spirit to the written Word, he laid a cardinal emphasis on the essential precedence of the

¹ 1k. 3.16.

secret testimony of the Spirit, but showed that that by no means precluded a subjective activity on the part of man, or the necessity of his diligent attention to, and study of, the Word. Similarly, in his treatment of man's benefitting from the available salvation, he does not discountenance the 'psychological' or 'anthropocentric' aspect by an exclusive emphasis on the 'theocentric' aspect. Admittedly he might well favour describing the realisation of salvation in terms of the Holy Spirit's 'application' of the riches of Christ rather than the sinner's 'appropriation' of them. He is never tired of emphasising that, first and foremost, it is an action of God in us and that anything that happens on man's side is secondary. Far from despising the experiential aspect, however, Calvin deals with it at considerable length in his discussion of faith.

Faith, quite obviously, is not innate or inherent in man and no amount of engineering or ingenuity on man's part will produce it. It is no use his probing into the depths of his subconscious for it, because the plain fact is that it is not there. It comes as the result of the creative act of some energetic Will outside his own. "Faith itself is produced only by the Spirit."

As faith is His principal work, all those passages (in Scripture) which express His power and operations are, in a great measure referred to it, as it is only by faith that He brings us to the light of the Gospel, as John teaches, that to those who believe in Christ is given the privilege 'to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'¹

¹ Jn. 1.12.

Opposing God to flesh and blood, he declares it to be a supernatural gift, that those who would otherwise remain in unbelief receive Christ by faith. (III.1.4.)

Commenting more copiously on John 1.12, Calvin shows that

Faith does not proceed from ourselves, but is the fruit of spiritual regeneration; for the Evangelist affirms that no man can believe unless he is begotten of God: and therefore faith is a heavenly gift. It follows secondly, that faith is not bare or cold knowledge since no man can believe who has not been renewed by the Spirit of God. It may be thought that the Evangelist reverses the natural order by making regeneration to precede faith, whereas on the contrary, it is an effect of faith, and ought to be placed later... Faith is the work of the Holy Spirit who dwells in none but the children of God... The illumination of our minds by the Holy Spirit belongs to our renewal, and thus faith flows from regeneration as from its source.

In one of his letters Calvin tells his correspondent that

By faith alone are we made partakers of this righteousness (of Christ), and also that this faith is kindled in us by the secret grace of the Holy Spirit, which is a gratuitous and peculiar gift, which God communicates to whomsoever He wills, and that not only to introduce them into the right path, but to make them continue in it to the end.¹

These and similar considerations go to prove how insipid and ludicrous it is to define faith as nothing more 'than a certain common assent to the Gospel History' or to bare doctrine. Also, much as it might appear to the contrary, to define faith in terms of 'having God as its object is merely to "hurry wretched souls away from the right mark..." "It is true, indeed, that faith has respect to God only; but to this we should add, that it acknowledges Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, God would remain far off, concealed from us, were we not

¹ Letter CCCCXXX.

irradiated by the brightness of Christ. All that the Father had, He deposited with His only begotten Son, in order that He might manifest Himself in Him... Since...we must be led by the Spirit, and thus stimulated to seek Christ, so must we also remember that the invisible Father is to be sought nowhere but in this image." (III.2.1.) Calvin quotes Augustine's warning, "the surest way to avoid all errors is to know Him who is both God and man. It is to God we tend and it is by man we go, and both of these are found only in Christ". Faith inwrought by the Spirit "has all its stability in Christ".

No less an insult is offered the Holy Spirit by one of the Roman Catholic vagaries known as "implicit faith", comprising an implicit acquiescence in whatever is thrust upon the "believer" by the Church. Such a blind submission of the mind to the dictates of such an external authority is the direct antithesis of living faith. "Faith consists not in ignorance, but in knowledge - knowledge not of God merely, but of the divine will." (III.2.2.) False modesty in this matter is vicious. "To honour ignorance tempered with humility with the name of faith, is most absurd." (III.2.3.) In preaching on Abraham's faith in Genesis 15.6 ('and he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness') Calvin reminds us that "Humility is not a kind of modesty; it is not a nice attitude before God, but it means our being utterly stripped of all good, so that there is nothing else left to us but to cast ourselves at the feet of God".¹ There is not

¹ Opera. XLIII. 700.

much affinity between this latter type of humility, bearing the hallmark of the Spirit upon it, and the former attitude for which 'humility' is an utter misnomer.

There is a sense, however, in which the Spirit can produce an 'implicit faith' which is accompanied or, at least, followed, by true humility. Because of man's errors and lack of spiritual insight there is, even in the case of many privileged believers, a great beyond, which they are as yet unable to comprehend, and at the zenith of their belief they need help for their unbelief. "In all men faith is always mingled with incredulity." (III.2.4.) In the noetic sphere there is a parallel to the "simul justus et peccator" of the moral sphere.

Faith engendered by the Spirit may appear in the form of the merest glimmerings but it is developed by the same Spirit, and in its development and increase can be transformed. But true faith or knowledge of Christ, wherever found, "consists in receiving Him as He is offered by the Father, namely, as invested with His Gospel". It is through the Word that the Spirit brings men to Christ.

There is an inseparable relation between faith and the Word, and these can no more be disconnected from each other than rays of light from the sun... For faith includes not merely the knowledge that God is, but also...a perception of His will towards us...as ascertained from His Word...and the character in which He is pleased to manifest Himself to us.
(III.2.6.)

But what word, or what in the Word is normally used by the Spirit to create faith? Does He snatch up any word

indiscriminately and thrust it upon man, with faith following as an immediate result? Does not the word of reproach and condemnation cause man to flee from rather than to God? And yet the will of God is demonstrably present in His judgment. Truth brandished alone by the Spirit can be the fiery and forbidding two-edged sword. The Spirit must weld it together with the benevolence or mercy of God; mercy and truth are conjoined in the promises of God, which promises when illumined by the Spirit promote confidence in the believer and cause him to seek rather than shun his Redeemer. Calvin thus arrives at a full definition of faith as "a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour towards us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ, and revealed to our minds, and sealed on our hearts, by the Holy Spirit". (III.2.7.)

Calvin hastens to denounce the nugatory distinction drawn by his opponents between 'formed' and 'unformed' faith, by which they signify that men can give their assent to doctrines according to an 'unformed' faith and have added to this assent at a later date a certain 'supervening quality of love'. Calvin vehemently refutes such a frigid quality as this 'assent' is made out to be, and claims that "assent itself is more a matter of the heart than the head; of the affection than the intellect". In an admirable passage he tells us that

Since faith embraces Christ as offered by the Father, and He is offered not only for justification, for forgiveness of sins and peace, but also for sanctification, as the fountain of living waters, it is certain that no man will ever know Him aright without at the same time receiving the sanctification of the Spirit; or, to express the matter more plainly, faith consists in the knowledge of Christ; Christ cannot be known without the sanctification of His Spirit: therefore faith cannot possibly be

disjoined from pious affection. (III.2.8.)

Many indeed may give the impression and may deceive themselves that they possess faith, but it is eventually unmasked and shown up in its evanescence. They do not

truly perceive the power of spiritual grace and the sure light of faith; but the Lord, the better to convict them, and leave them without excuse, instils into their minds such a sense of His Goodness as can be felt without the Spirit of Adoption... They never have any other than a confused sense of grace, laying hold of the shadow rather than the substance, because the Spirit properly seals the forgiveness of sins in the elect only, applying it by special faith to their use.
(III.2.11.)

Thus the knowledge in which faith consists is not transient, but, imparted by the Spirit, is at a higher level than that of the senses -

The human mind must far surpass and go beyond itself in order to reach it. Nor even when it has reached it does it comprehend what it feels, but persuaded of what it comprehends not, it understands more from mere certainty of persuasion than it could discern of any human matter by its own capacity... The knowledge of faith consists more of certainty than discernment. (III.2.14.)

Faith must be conceived in the sense of confidence, and "our faith is not true unless it enables us to appear calmly in the presence of God".¹ For "none hope well in the Lord save those who confidently glory in being the heirs of the heavenly kingdom..." and "the goodness of God is not properly comprehended when security does not follow as its fruit".²

Calvin, however, is not obscurantist in this matter and

¹ Ibid. 15. ² Ibid. 16.

fully recognises that there are few who can maintain faith at an even tenor and completely unruffled over the whole course of their lives. He indulges in no naïve idealism in this respect. He acknowledges that the choicest saints have not had "consciences possessing a placid quiet, uninterrupted by perturbation". Many of them confess to the presence of tension in regard to faith, a tension indicative of that in man which has called forth the description of him in another context as 'simul justus et peccator'. "The believer finds within himself two principles: the one filling him with delight in recognising the divine goodness, the other filling him with bitterness under a sense of his fallen state; the one leading him to recline on the promise of the Gospel, the other alarming him by the conviction of his iniquity; the one making him exult with the anticipation of life, the other making him tremble with the fear of death." (III.2.18.)

It seems as if Calvin is suggesting in some instances something akin to the 'assault' on faith or the 'temptation' - 'Anfechtung' to which Barth refers¹ and that God - that Christ Himself - is involved and active in it, shaking man out of complacency in this 'hiddenness' and precariousness of faith. But Calvin is not long before showing that faith is not a razor-edge experience for the believer. The Spirit uses and transforms the 'fear and trembling' and enables faith to fortify itself with the Word of God before the citadel of the soul is reached. Faith, then, as the shield, receiving the darts of unbelief, either wards them off entirely, or at least

¹ Barth, The Holy Ghost and Christian Life, p. 53.

breaks their force, and prevents them from reaching the vitals.

Calvin calls that a "pestilential philosophy" which would compound a mixture of faith and unbelief. Its advocates, he says, admit that

Whenever we look to Christ we are furnished with full ground for hope; but as we are ever unworthy of all the blessings which are offered us in Christ, they will have us to fluctuate and hesitate in the view of our unworthiness. In short, they give conscience a position between hope and fear, making it alternate, by successive turns, to the one and the other... But what kind of confidence is that which is ever and anon supplanted by despair? They tell you, if you look to Christ, salvation is certain; if you return to yourself, damnation is certain. Therefore, your mind must be alternately ruled by diffidence and hope; as if we were to imagine Christ standing at a distance; and not rather indwelling us. We expect salvation from Him - not because He stands aloof from us, but because...he not only makes us partakers of all His benefits, but also of Himself... According to... these objectors Paul ought to have said, Christ indeed has life in himself, but you, as you are sinners, remain liable to death and condemnation.

(III.2.24.)

Calvin by affirming the believer's experimental communion with Christ emphatically opposes this. In the light of the above passage it would be interesting to know how satisfied Calvin would be with Barth's discussion of faith, in which he writes

If we are justified, we are so simply in Christ and not in ourselves. That it is really we who are yet and indeed in that state (i.e. of justification), is and remains undisclosed to us, because it becomes revealed to us in and through the Word of God. Faith confides, for it confides in God's Word: in this way it is experience, joy, assurance. But because what the Word says to faith, is hidden in this manner faith is hidden from itself.¹

¹ Barth. op. cit. pp. 49, 50.

For all his admission of the conflicts of faith and the 'eschatological' import of the 'promises' of God, Calvin desires to show that the faith given in and by the Spirit is something which is really in the confident possession of the believer. He is not at all favourably disposed towards any dialectical sophistries that would tend in any way to vitiate this confidence. The healthy faith produced by the Spirit gives no nightmare experience of a seemingly interminable walk along the edge of a precipitous cliff.

For not only does piety beget reverence to God, but the sweet attractiveness of grace inspires a man, though desponding of himself, at once with fear and admiration, making him feel his dependence on God, and submit humbly to His power. (III.2.23.)

It has clearly emerged from Calvin's discussion that the Holy Spirit has a two-fold operation in regard to faith in Christ through the Word. He alone, as He comes to the sinner can first, illumine his mind, and, secondly, confirm his heart. Both these aspects of His operation are absolutely essential if full faith is to be realised.

A simple external manifestation of the word ought to be amply sufficient to produce faith, did not our blindness and perverseness prevent. But such is the proneness of our mind to vanity, that it can never adhere to the truth of God, and such its dullness, that it is always blind even in His light. Hence without the illumination of the Spirit the word has no effect; and hence also it is obvious that faith is something higher than human understanding. Nor were it sufficient for the mind to be illumined by the Spirit of God unless the heart also were strengthened and supported by His power... Faith is the special gift of God in both ways, - in purifying the mind so as to give it a relish for divine truth, and afterwards in establishing it therein. For the Spirit does not merely originate faith, but gradually increases it, until by its means he conducts us into the heavenly kingdom. (III.2.33.)

Calvin, as always, finds no difficulty in multiplying evidence from the Word to the effect that man is destitute of the means of coming to a saving knowledge of God apart from the Spirit. He elaborates on this theme in his commentaries on such texts as 1 Cor. 2.10-14; Matth. 16.17, which describe the 'natural man', and Peter's Spirit-inspired confession and grasp of Christ.

We cannot possibly come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit, so when we are drawn we are both in mind and spirit exalted far above our own understanding. For the soul, when illumined by Him, receives as it were a new eye, enabling it to contemplate heavenly mysteries, by the splendour of which it was previously dazzled. And thus, indeed, it is only when the human intellect is irradiated by the light of the Holy Spirit that it begins to have a taste of those things which pertain to the kingdom of God; previously it was too stupid and senseless to have any relish for them... The Word is...like the sun which shines upon all, but is of no use to the blind... It cannot penetrate our mind unless the Spirit, that internal teacher, by His enlightening power make an entrance for it. (III.2.34.)

The Holy Spirit thus confers upon man, as it were, a new faculty, together with the power to use it. This faculty of faith enables him to recognise the testimony of the Word to Christ. But, as a notable admirer of Calvin well illustrated the position¹ - the shipowner when faced with the two applicants for the captaincy of his ship needs to do more than believe the testimony concerning both; he must commit his ship to the one or the other and abide by the consequences, if, in order to be able to exercise his egotistic self-assertion, he chooses the docile candidate who loses his ship, rather than the other who wanted absolute control. Similarly,

1

Kuyper, "The Work of the Holy Spirit", p. 398.

It is not enough for man to assent intellectually to the testimony to Christ, but his heart must be convinced and committed to Him. "What the mind has imbibed must be transferred into the heart." (III.2.36.)

The word is not received in faith when it merely flutters in the brain, but when it has taken deep root in the heart, and become an invincible bulwark to withstand and repel all the assaults of temptation. But if the illumination of the Spirit is the true source of understanding in the intellect, much more manifest is His agency in the confirmation of the heart, inasmuch as there is more distrust in the heart than blindness in the mind; and it is more difficult to inspire the soul with security than to imbue it with knowledge. (Idem.)

The Holy Spirit thus performs the part of a seal, sealing upon our hearts the very promises, the certainty of which was previously impressed upon our minds. This also serves as an earnest in establishing and confirming these promises. In a recent study of Calvin's thought on this point and on his comment on Eph. 1.13¹ we are reminded that in human matters

¹ Edmond Grin, "quelques aspects de la pensée de Calvin sur le Saint-Esprit et leurs enseignements pour nous" in Theologische Zeitschrift, Juli/August, 1947, p. 281. The full passage in French reads: Dans les affaires humaines, la présence d'un cachet fait tomber toute hésitation et tout doute. Anciennement c'était la principale marque par laquelle on reconnaissait les lettres échangées entre amis. Aujourd'hui encore grâce à cette empreinte - on discerne les choses vraies et certaines, des fausses et supposées - eh bien! si par sa Parole Dieu promet de nous être un Père, par le sceau du Saint-Esprit Il nous donne la certitude indiscutable de notre adoption. L'Esprit témoigne en nous que, malgré notre révolte, Dieu nous traite comme ses enfants. Ainsi nous nous savons - adoptés à l'espérance du salut éternel. Et la condition que nous obtenons par Christ et par l'Esprit est beaucoup meilleure que celle du premier homme. Car Christ nous a apporté l'Esprit, d'est-à-dire la vie.

Une certitude nouvelle est imprimée en nous, donc une connaissance: celle de l'amour de Dieu envers nous. A cet égard le Saint-Esprit est à la fois gage et véhicule. Cette connaissance, pour Calvin, est - précédée du Saint-

the presence of a seal does away with all hesitation and doubt. Formerly it was the chief mark by which one recognised letters exchanged between friends. Today also, by means of this imprint one discerns the true and sure things from the false and feigned. If by His Word God promises to be a Father to us, by the seal of the Holy Spirit He gives us the indisputable certainty of our adoption. Christ has brought the Spirit to us, that is to say, life. A new certainty is planted in us, a knowledge - that of the love of God towards us. In this aspect the Spirit is at the same time a token and a vehicle. This knowledge for Calvin is preceded by the Holy Spirit who makes it flow within our hearts. For the blessings which God has prepared for those who serve Him are things hidden from the ears, eyes and understanding of the natural man. Only the Holy Spirit can manifest them and make them felt.

It is then, most natural, and not in the least presumptuous, for a Christian, worked upon by the Spirit of God, to claim an undoubted knowledge of the divine will and to have done with falsehood, uncertainty and ambiguity. No greater temerity is there in his glorying in the possession of the Spirit of God, inasmuch as to separate faith, which is His peculiar work, from Himself is to insult the Holy Spirit.

(III.2.39.)

1 (contd. from previous page)

Esprit, qui la fait découler dedans nos cœurs. Car les biens que Dieu a préparés à ceux qui le servent sont choses cachées et aux oreilles, et aux yeux et à l'entendement de l'homme naturel. Seul le Saint-Esprit les peut manifester et faire sentir.

Similarly, being the work of the Eternal Spirit and the Risen Christ, faith is not confined to the present moment but looks beyond it, not only to a tomorrow as a point of time, but also, and more especially, beyond the whole course of this life, stretching forward to a future immortality. (C.f. III.2.40.) The mind rising through the Spirit to a foretaste of the Divine goodness is at the same time inflamed with love to God since the abundance of joy which God has treasured up for those who fear Him cannot be truly known without making a most powerful impression. He who is thus once affected is raised and carried entirely towards Him. The Spirit who engenders faith engenders love also. (III.2.41.)

Wherever this living faith exists it must have the hope of eternal life as its inseparable companion, or rather must of itself beget and manifest it; where it is wanting, however clearly and elegantly we may discourse of faith, it is certain we have it not. (III.2.42.)

Faith and hope are integrally related.

Hope is nothing more than the expectation of those things which faith previously believes to have been truly promised by God. Thus, faith believes that God is true; hope expects that in due season He will manifest His truth. Faith believes that He is our Father; hope expects that He will always act the part of a Father towards us. Faith believes that eternal life has been given to us; hope expects that it will one day be revealed. Faith is the foundation on which hope rests; hope nourishes and sustains faith. (Idem.)

The trinity of faith, hope and love therefore have the same object and all take their rise only from the same Holy Spirit of the Triune God.

(ii) Repentance

Calvin has already in some measure shown how "faith possesses Christ and gives the enjoyment of His benefits", but he proceeds to add an exposition of the effects resulting from the work of the Spirit in producing faith. One of the cardinal effects is repentance. "That repentance not only follows faith, but is produced by it, ought to be without controversy." (III.3.1.) In this reversal of what is commonly held to be the normal order, Calvin introduces what, to many, is a "Copernican revolution" in the sphere of experience. He would probably not hold tenaciously to a stereotyped form of operation of the Spirit in the inner, intimate and intricate details, inasmuch as the Spirit of God acts in pure grace and sovereign liberty. Nevertheless insofar as a logical, rather than chronological, anteriority and posteriority is discernible, he would say that faith precedes repentance. "Those who think that repentance precedes faith instead of flowing from, or being produced by it, as the fruit by the tree, have never understood its nature, and are moved to adopt that view on very insufficient grounds." (Idem.)

He gives a fair hearing to, and presentation of, these views, only to show their weaknesses. He refers to those who speak 'simply and sincerely', and seemingly Scripturally, of repentance as consisting of two parts - "mortification" and "quickenings". By the first term they imply the "grief of soul and terror, produced by a conviction of sin and a sense of the divine judgment". (III.3.3.) This 'contrition' enacted against such a background of tension and torture is

reminiscent (possibly more by contrast) of that which the Anabaptists prescribed as a credential in their neophytes. In the latter case it tended to become less and less real and was 'cut and dried' by a time limit. In more recent times, in certain circles, doubt was cast upon the veracity of the profession of faith of one who had not spent three whole weeks in the "gap (or gorge) of conviction of sin". Such attitudes are unacceptable to Calvin for one reason, among others - namely, that they suggest that repentance is prefatory and elementary, belonging only to the childhood of Christian experience, and subsequently dispensable. With the second part - 'quickenings', Calvin does not quarrel so much. By it they mean the 'comfort' produced by faith when, after passing through 'contrition', a man sees the goodness of God and the mercy, grace and salvation obtained through Christ, and looks up, begins to breathe, takes courage, and passes, as it were, from death to life. He would, however, have them refrain from applying the term 'quickenings' to the joy experienced by the relieved sinner, since it really means the desire of pious and holy living which springs from the new birth.

Another line - equally removed from Calvin's viewpoint - is taken by those who refer to two types of repentance, namely Legal and Evangelical repentance. The former stands for that condition in which a man is convicted of his sin and is over-awed by, and fearfully dreads, the divine anger, but is inescapably shut up to it. Incidentally this is quite different from the condition of the one who 'sins against the Holy Spirit' in the more exclusive sense. He commits this

unpardonable sin, or rather finds himself in an unpardonable state - a state in which he cannot, nor desires to, repent, - who, "while so constrained by the power of divine truth that he cannot plead ignorance, yet deliberately resists, and that merely for the sake of resisting". (III.3.22.) Such a one is convinced in conscience that what he repudiates and impugns is the Word of God, and yet ceases not to impugn it, and he is said to blaspheme against the Spirit inasmuch as he struggles against the illumination which is the work of the Spirit. This is to commit spiritual suicide. It is none other than the spirit of blasphemy "when a man audaciously and of set purpose, rushes forth to insult His divine Name". A spirit such as this cannot but poison and putrify the soul and render it wholly unable to breathe in the atmosphere of the Spirit of God. The soul is automatically cut off from the only source of the light of life.

As instances of Legal repentance Calvin cites Cain, Saul and Judas whose remorse and 'repentance' were "nothing better than a kind of threshold to hell, into which having entered even in the present life, they began to endure the punishment inflicted by the presence of an offended God". (III.3.4.) With their case he contrasts that of Hezekiah, the Ninevites and David who exhibit 'Evangelical' repentance in that they, having been convicted of sin, and being seemingly in desperation, cast themselves on the divine mercy and are received by it and restored.

Nevertheless, with both these kinds of repentance we are still moving within what can be described as the "pre-

Copernican" framework; repentance is still being given precedence over faith. This is what Calvin will not allow, and he seeks a hearing for his newer and truer view - or rather for the Scriptural view, for as in every context, he here also claims fidelity to the Word of God. The heraldic proclamation of John Baptist and the regal bidding of our Lord Himself - "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," is hopelessly misconstrued unless it is taken to mean "As the kingdom of heaven is at hand, for that reason repent". That is, the promises and presence of the gracious Spirit-resources of the kingdom (i.e. "forgiveness of sins, salvation, life and every other blessing which we obtain in Christ" (III.3.19.)) are placarded before man, who, in full view of them is exhorted to take the necessary action - or rather reaction, since, if the proclamation has really reached and found him, he is already subject to the Spirit's working. Otherwise he is fettered and cannot move a step towards the Kingdom. This is what Calvin says in commenting on Acts 2.17.

We can have no more excellent thing given us of God than the grace of the Spirit; yea, that all other things are nothing worth if this be wanting. For when God will briefly promise salvation to His people, He affirmeth that He will give them His Spirit. Hereupon it followeth that we can obtain no good things until we have the Spirit given us. And truly it is, as it were, the key which openeth unto us the door that we may enter into all the treasures of spiritual good things, and that we may also have entrance into the kingdom of God.

It is baseless, then, to speak of the fruits of repentance in the form of righteous reformation, or of any spiritual goods, if the Spirit has not already laid the foundation of a confident trust or faith in the author of righteousness. "No

righteousness can be found where the Spirit, whom Christ received to communicate to His members, reigns not." (III.3.2.) The Spirit establishes the bridgehead of faith before repentance dares to move.

It would be misrepresenting Calvin, however, to say that there is a time-lag between the Spirit's pioneering work in faith and His follow-up work in repentance. He only wishes to show "that a man cannot seriously engage in repentance unless he know that he is of God. But no man is truly persuaded that he is of God until he have embraced His offered favour". (III.3.2.) No man is going to risk embarking on the rigorous and often humiliating and partly disintegrating task of repentance, unless he knows that behind him stands solidly the uniting and safe power of God.

Calvin is in good company in his insistence on the precedence of faith, for it is implicit in Augustine's famous cryptic dictum. "I would not seek Thee, had I not already found Thee," and Blaise Pascal suggests it when he places on the Divine lips the words - "Thou wouldst not seek Me, hadst thou not already found Me." To seek God in repentance is to show that the Spirit has already been seeking, has found, and has been found of, the man who undertakes repentance.

Repentance is too high and costly a matter to be started on unless one already knows that the resources of the eternal Spirit are not only available, but in a sense are in one's possession. When God exhorts man to repent, it is cruel of Him except He first give him the guarantee, by the Spirit, of

the safety and success of the outcome. This truth is enshrined in Augustine's confession "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt". The soul's perennial prayer is "Draw me, and I will follow on".

Thus Calvin arrives at his own comprehensive definition of repentance as "A real conversion of our life unto God, proceeding from sincere and serious fear of God; and consisting in the mortification of our flesh and the old man, and the quickening of the Spirit". (III.3.5.)

The three parts of this definition are treated separately and progressively inasmuch as they each show the work of the Holy Spirit.

Whether repentance is taken in the Hebrew connotation of 'conversion' or 'turning again', or in the Greek sense of a 'change of mind or purpose', it is a very radical business which cannot possibly be done through man's initiative or ingenuity, but calls for the profound, re-creative work of the Holy Spirit. In describing St. Paul's conversion in Acts 9.5 Calvin remarks "therefore, such is the beginning of our conversion, that the Lord seeketh us of His own accord, when we wander and go astray, though He be not called and sought; that He changeth the stubborn affections of our heart, to the end He may have us to be apt to be taught". In conversion then, the Spirit does no superficial or perimeter work, but deals with root principles in the nature of man with ^{which} man, unaided, can do nothing. Indeed, Calvin maintains that "it were easier to create us at first, than for us by our own strength to acquire

a more excellent nature". (III.3.21.) It is the Spirit alone then who can bring man into a new and eternal dimension of life, or rather can break into man from that dimension and thus constitute him a new creation. Mere extraneous additions to the nature of man are of utterly no avail, and that is why "external repentance by the observance of ceremonies" are less than useless. Man requires a "transformation not only in external works, but in the soul itself, which is able only after it has put off its old habits to bring forth fruits conformable to its renovation". (III.3.6.) The 'circumcision of the heart' and the creating of a new heart and a new spirit and the fundamental changing of the internal affections belong only to the Spirit of God. "To commence the study of righteousness unless impiety shall first have been eradicated from their inmost heart" (idem) by the Holy Spirit, is both foolish and fatal on the part of man.

It appears then, that in order to understand Calvin at this point we must recognise that he means more by 'conversion' and 'repentance' than is normally implied. He is already thinking in terms of regeneration, of the new birth in which man is born of the Spirit, born anew and from above, and by which he sees, and enters into, the Kingdom of the Spirit of Christ. This will not necessarily mean that he indulges in ecstatic orgies, extravagant performances or in particular, the 'frenzied excesses' of the Anabaptists and their like. It will mean, however, that a new 'mystical' relation will begin between him and Christ, and on the subjective side this will be evidenced by a revolutionary and profound change at a

level deeper than the psychological and moral, namely in the spiritual, meanwhile powerfully affecting the will.

The second part of the definition of repentance is itself also tripartite. The first element in the 'sincere and serious fear of God' is the thought and sense of Divine Judgment produced in man by the Spirit. Here the Spirit - the 'Comforter' - performs His paradoxical task of comforting ultimately through intense discomfort. Man can not come to peace with God before he is made to know the enmity existing between him and the God of holiness and righteousness. This, however, he can never know of himself; he can never be uncomfortable of himself; he can never of himself know that he is a sinner. It is only in the Holy Spirit - only as the Holy Spirit through the Word directs his attention to that appointed Day in the which God will 'judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained' that man will become mindful of the need of a thoroughgoing transformation of life. He is not open to the mercy of God until he is opened to His judgment; "as far as anyone is self-satisfied, so far does he raise an obstacle to God's beneficence." Only the Spirit can crash through and remove the obstacle, and introduce reverential awe. It is "a standing truth," says Calvin, "that wherever the fear of God is in vigour, the Spirit has been carrying on His saving work". (III.3.21.)

The second element shows that the Spirit strikes deeper. It is not sufficient for man to fear and tremble at the distant rumblings of the thunder of Judgment and accordingly to amend his ways; that can be largely selfish and a mere saving of his

own skin. There must be a transplanting, as it were, of this judgment into his own categories; he himself must pass moral judgment on his own sin and wherever he sees sin militating against the holy love of God. What God in His love abhors, that must he despise - and for that reason; "no man ever hated sin without being previously enamoured of righteousness." (III.3.20.) The Holy Spirit must inculcate an ever increasing dread, abhorrence and aggressive hatred of sin in all its ramifications; 'godly sorrow' is as intense and practical as that. "It is not strange," says Calvin, "that this should be, for unless we are stung to the quick, the sluggishness of our carnal nature cannot be corrected; nay, no degree of pungency would suffice for our stupor and sloth, did not God lift the rod and strike deeper." Calvin is certainly not alone in recognizing that the Holy Spirit must give the realisation of the heinousness of sin and many have confessed with Cowper, in addressing the 'Holy Dove' - "I hate the sins that made Thee mourn, and drove Thee from my breast." It is the same Spirit who, at the threshold of the spiritual life, and at every point along the way, enables us to despise sin and desire its dismissal.

The third and last element mentioned by Calvin in connection with the 'fear of God' is the breaking down, 'as with hammers', of the rebellious spirit found in man. Nothing less than the 'stern threatenings' of God will rouse man to a realisation of his 'depraved dispositions'. His will is in direct antagonism and haughty opposition to that of God, and one of the major factors in the salvation and radical transformation of man's moral personality is the Holy Spirit's

re-direction of the will, the 'depriving of his depravity', and His disposing man towards the fulfilment of God's purpose. Then only will his life bear positive reference to God and he will "render to God that service and honour of which He is impiously defrauded, whenever it is not our express purpose to submit to His authority". (III.3.7.)

When Calvin comes to the third part of his definition of repentance, and deals with its two-fold aspect of 'the mortification of the flesh' and 'the quickening of the Spirit', he shows unequivocally that he departs a long way from the more limited, popular sense of the term repentance. He himself says - "In one word, then, by repentance I understand a spiritual regeneration." (III.3.9.) But again his use of 'regeneration' does not accord with popular usage. It will help us if we see that for Calvin, 'repentance' covers the whole Christian life; the initial or 'initiatory' stages and experiences, to which most people would allude as 'regeneration' (in its limited connotation), he describes as 'conversion'. The subsequent and life-long process of the Christian life which he often refers to as 'regeneration', is more popularly described as 'Sanctification' (not that the term is foreign to him). Calvin then, sees no chronological break, as it were, between an initial repentant act or period and a subsequent stage of sanctification. It is one whole span wrought out by the Spirit of God. Repentance is a life-long business.

Through the blessing of Christ we are renewed by that regeneration into the righteousness of God from which we had fallen through Adam, the Lord being pleased in this manner to restore the integrity of all whom He appoints to the inheritance

of life. This renewal, indeed is not accomplished in a moment, a day, or a year, but by uninterrupted, sometimes even by slow, progress God abolishes the remains of carnal corruption in His elect, cleanses them from pollution, and consecrates them as His temples, restoring all their inclinations to real purity, so that during their whole lives they may practise repentance, and know that death is the only termination to this warfare... That believers may attain to it, (the image of God in righteousness and true holiness) God assigns repentance as the goal towards which they must keep running during the whole course of their lives. (III.3.9.)

Since repentance is such an extended process it can never be the basis of a present assurance of salvation, of reconciliation, of forgiveness, of justification before God. On this ground Calvin can refute the Romish paraphernalia of repentance which they make out to include 'contrition' of the heart, confession of the mouth and satisfaction of works.

Far from disparaging true contrition or compunction of heart, Calvin, as we have seen, upholds and commends it as evidence of true repentance. He further enlarges upon it (III.3.15.) in dealing with Paul's description of repentance¹ with its seven causes, effects or parts - carefulness, excuse, indignation, fear, desire, zeal and revenge. This is evidently the work of the Spirit. What he quarrels with is the Romish cruelty in representing it as the first step in obtaining pardon; "they exact it as due, that is, full and complete." How vicious and fiendish it is when

such bitterness of sorrow is demanded as may correspond to the magnitude of the offence and be weighed in the balance with confidence of pardon. Miserable consciences are sadly perplexed and tormented when they see that the

¹ 2 Cor. 7.11.

contrition due for sin is laid upon them, and yet that they have no measure of what is due, so as to enable them to determine that they have made full payment. (III.4.2.)

This is evidently not the way of the Spirit. The Spirit turns the eyes of man away from himself, from his wretchedness, turmoil and captivity and fixes both eyes on the mercy of God and His refreshment, rest and liberty, and teaches him in his humility to give glory to God.

The Holy Spirit is not the instigator of, and does not lay His benediction upon, the unhealthy and stealthy auricular confession of the Roman Church. The Spirit leads the penitent straight to God with his confession and often gives rise to a spontaneous confession before men. All this has salutary results for the sinner, and the church is edified which hears his confession, and on special occasions makes its own, in the presence of the minister, whose authority and 'power of the keys' is constituted by the Word - and of course the Spirit, since for Calvin, they ever work together. Even the Apostles had not the power of binding and loosing before being endued with the Holy Spirit. No man who has not previously received the Holy Spirit is competent to possess the power of the keys. No one can use the keys, unless the Holy Spirit precede, teaching and dictating what is to be done. (III.4.20.)

Calvin never speaks with greater vehemence than when he denounces the 'satisfaction of works'. To condone and accept these attempts at making up for sins committed, as a meritorious basis for forgiveness, would be to retract the whole Reformation proclamation of the gratuitous pardon of God in Christ. Just

as strongly does he reject indulgences and purgatory and the whole 'lock, stock and barrel' of the Romish machinery.

It could not be more clear then, that nothing whatsoever that man can do can bring him into a safe position or condition in the sight of God. Since at no point along the road of repentance can man breathe a sigh of relief as if he was safe from there on; if he is to have an assurance, it must lie in some other direction. Calvin thus paves the way for the cardinal truth of 'justification by faith'.

Since the Holy Spirit reveals this truth at an early stage of the Christian life - since 'justification' occurs at its threshold - we shall now pass on to consider it. We shall return later to the consideration of the work of the Spirit in 'sanctification'.

(iii) Justification

It has already been noted that in reversing the usual order of faith and repentance, Calvin introduces a 'Copernican revolution'. To the reader who is acquainted with other theological systems than Calvin's, it seems that the Reformer is, in a somewhat different sense, indulging in another such 'revolution' in his treating of repentance, regeneration and sanctification before dealing with the cardinal reformation doctrine of "Justification by faith". There is, however, scrupulous 'method in his madness'. Moreover, the order which he adopts bears much relevance to the work of the Spirit.

He has shown how repentance, which is unmistakably the work of the Spirit, is a life-long affair. But despite the fact of its being in the hand of the Spirit, it can never yield the certainty that the man, in whom it occurs as a process, will at any single point during that process, or eventually at its end, stand acquitted at the bar of God's judgment. Such an assurance of acquittal, of safety, of justification in God's sight, must lie in some other quarter, and rest on a completely different ground than man's attainment and condition. This certainty will have a basis outside the fluctuations of man's subjectivity and yet the connecting link will be faith - faith fastening itself to, or being fastened by the Spirit, to Christ as its objective righteousness, and sole ground of justification.

Faith has also been shown to be anything but arid and barren and doctrinaire. The term faith is pregnant with meaning and dynamic through and through. Involving the whole personality, it must work itself out on the vertical and horizontal planes since that is the characteristic and condition of its birth.

Christ, given to us by the kindness of God, is apprehended by faith, by means of which we obtain in particular a twofold benefit; first, being reconciled by the righteousness of Christ, God becomes instead of a Judge, an indulgent Father; and secondly, being sanctified by His Spirit, we aspire to integrity and purity of life.

This second benefit, Calvin has amplified at considerable length. He epitomises it when he says that the fruits of repentance (and hence of sanctification) are seen in "offices

of piety towards God, and love towards men, general holiness and purity of life'. (III.3.16.)

Having thus unearthed the flimsy foundations of the Babel-tower of man's self-righteousness, and having likewise forestalled the oft-times pharisaical objections of the worshippers of an attenuated St. James, Calvin can freely move on to his definition of Justification by faith. He throws it into greater relief by painting it on the same canvas as justification by works. He says that "to be justified in the sight of God" is to be counted by God as being righteous and on the basis of that righteous standing to be admitted into God's favour. If then a man by diligent application of all his energy (even with the professed help of the Spirit) during his life attained to untrammelled goodness - a goodness conformable to God's righteous standard - then God would hold nothing against him: indeed God would be obliged to accept him and attest his merit and would find that His mercy was redundant. This hypothetical case, however, has been summarily obviated by Calvin, and shown to have no more reality than any other figment of man's beclouded imagination. At an early stage in his discussion of the work of the Spirit in faith, he intimated three important truths.

First, "that since God by His Law prescribes what we ought to do, failure in any one respect subjects us to the dreadful judgment of eternal death, which it declares. Secondly, because it is not only difficult, but altogether beyond our strength and ability, to fulfil the demands of the Law, if we look only to ourselves and consider what is due to our merits,

no ground of hope remains, but we lie forsaken of God under eternal death." It follows quite naturally then, thirdly, "that there is only one method of deliverance which can rescue us from this miserable calamity, namely, when Christ the Redeemer appears, by whose hand our heavenly Father, out of His infinite goodness and mercy, has been pleased to succour us, if we with true faith embrace this mercy, and with firm hope rest in it." (III.2.1.)

Over against being justified by works then, man will be justified by faith when, excluded from the righteousness of works, he by faith lays hold of the righteousness of Christ, and clothed in it appears in the sight of God not as a sinner, but as righteous. Thus (and here Calvin gives his definition) "we simply interpret justification, as the acceptance with which God receives us into His favour as if we were righteous; and we say that this justification consists in the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ". (III.11.2.) Calvin wishes to drive home this truth above all else and he does not feel that he can emphasise and simplify it too much. His writings bristle with reminders that "justification by faith is reconciliation with God, and that this consists solely in the remission of sins." And as if this was not clear enough he says "justification may be termed in one word the remission of sins". (III.11.21.)

Why all this underlining of the juridical and absolving elements which are found in the salvation provided in Christ? There is one undeniable answer. Calvin is acutely conscious that the most pronounced opposition to the Holy Spirit of grace

occurs in this context. It is here also that the Spirit of God is seen to be in diametric opposition to the sinner-creature spirit of man. Sometimes the battle is in the open, sometimes underground, but wherever it is waged it is continually in progress. It is one of the most difficult tasks of the Spirit to break down the antagonism to sheer grace which is found in man's sinful pride. Man is not easily convinced that, due to his sinnership, he is not in continuity with God's Spirit and that no amount of striving on his part will effect this continuity; that it is useless his bringing over from his social outlook the commercial and competitive criteria and introducing them into the realm of spiritual traffic between his spirit and that of God. He simply does not find it natural or easy to acquiesce in the stubborn fact that his standing before God depends on a vertical movement from God's zenith in grace down to his zero in sin. There is no word that man has found so difficult to spell out in his living experience as the word "sola" in "sola fide". 'Fide' often falls easily from his life's lips but he stammers and stutters over 'sola'.

The Reformers have been accused¹ (despite their emphasis on 'justification by faith alone') of not refuting sufficiently the incipient inroads made into this truth by the staunchest of the Fathers who championed grace, and its sovereignty, namely Augustine. This accusation is not justified since there are passages in which Calvin distinctly names Augustine as clouding the issue. A contemporary theologian has well complained that

¹ Barth, The Holy Ghost and the Christian Life, p. 34.

"no herb has grown on earth that is a cure for the insanity of work-righteousness". Although Calvin would be the last to accuse Augustine of a gross 'insanity' in this respect, he does not hesitate to point out the inherent weaknesses in his thought.

Even the sentiment of Augustine, or at least his mode of expressing it, cannot be entirely approved of. For although he is admirable in stripping man of all merit of righteousness and transferring the whole praise of it to God, yet he classes the grace by which we are regenerated to newness of life under the head of sanctification. (III.11.15.)

Justification, in the writings of Augustine as in those of so many others, has the tendency of gliding almost imperceptibly into regeneration and sanctification. When commenting on the 'righteousness of God' without the law,¹ Calvin, having excluded the merit of works, and denying that works are blended with the mercy of God, says,

It is not unknown to me that Augustine gives a different explanation; for he thinks that the righteousness of God is the grace of regeneration: and this grace he allows to be free, because God renews us, when unworthy, by His Spirit; and from this he excludes the works of the law, that is, those works, by which men of themselves endeavour, without renovation, to render God indebted to them. I also well know, that some new speculators proudly adduce this sentiment, as though it were at this day revealed to them. But that the Apostle includes all works without exception, even those which the Lord produces in His own people, is evident from the context. For no doubt Abraham was regenerated and led by the Spirit of God at the time when he denied that he was justified by works... It appears evident that it is but a frivolous sophistry to say that we are justified in Christ because we are renewed by the Spirit, inasmuch as we are members of Christ, - that we are justified by faith, because

¹ Rom. 3.21.

we are united by faith to the body of Christ, - that we are justified freely, because God finds nothing in us but sin.

Another way in which work-righteousness is allowed admission, 'incognito', by Augustine and others, is when it is decked in the garb of 'love'. Justification is not only evidenced by love - loving obedience to God and loving approach to men - but is actually sought in love. "They indeed," says Calvin in Rom. 3.25, "allow that man is justified by faith: but not by faith alone; yea they place the efficacy of justification in love, though in words they ascribe it to faith." Augustine is guilty of this in his insistence on his meaning of the fact that "the love of God has been poured abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us".

He (Paul) says this spirit is given, namely bestowed upon us by the free goodness of God, and not rendered unto us for our merits. As Augustine notes very well, who, notwithstanding, is deceived in the exposition of the love of God; he says, we suffer adversity constantly, and are confirmed in hope, because, being regenerate by the Holy Spirit, we love God. This is indeed a godly saying, but comes not near the mind of Paul. For love here is not taken actively but passively,

that is, it is not man's love to God but God's love to man that justifies.

Also in answer to those who adduce Paul's eulogy of love in 1 Cor. 13 to disparage faith as the sole ground of salvation, Calvin easily shows that the faith which professes to remove mountains is not necessarily the true faith, and, more especially, love is said to excel true faith not because it is more meritorious but because it is more fruitful, of wider

extent, of more general service and always flourishes, whereas the use of faith is only for a time. But because love is greater than faith it does not follow that it can justify the sinner. Those who claim this, "overlooking the mercy of God, and passing by Christ, the sum of righteousness, maintain that we are justified by love as being superior to faith; just as if one were to maintain that a king is fitter to make a shoe than a shoemaker, because the king is infinitely the superior of the two". (III.18.8.)

Calvin, of course, knows that both faith and love are **exclusively** the work of the Holy Spirit in respect of salvation; but he knows that although the Spirit is jealous for the fact that it is He alone who produces them, He is more jealous for the fact that Christ's righteousness, and not anything produced by Him (i.e. the Spirit) in the individual, is the basis of justification. The Spirit is not congratulated at all when the results of His operation in the human heart are set up as rivals to the unique and independent merits of Christ. Anyway, even recognising the quality and extent of the regenerating influence of the Spirit in faith and love, it is exceedingly presumptuous on man's part to parade them before God. It is well to be reminded

that no believer ever performed one work, which if tested by the strict judgment of God could escape condemnation; and moreover, that were this granted to be possible (though it is not), yet the act being vitiated and polluted by the sins of which it is certain that the author of it is guilty, it is deprived of its merit. (III.14.11.)

That purity is never to be found in our sacrifices which, in themselves, would be pleasing to God.¹

¹ C. 1 Pet. 2. 5.

We always go lamely to God. Beyond about half-way, praise does not get merit with God. Meanwhile, by our fresh sins, we quickly remove as far as we can from God's grace.¹

One sin is enough to extinguish and wipe out all remembrance of prior righteousness. (III.14.10.)

From these and similar quotations it is obvious how ridiculous is man's vaunted confidence in any righteousness produced within or by him - even though the production were the result of the combined operation of his own spirit with the Divine Spirit. Indeed (to state it paradoxically) such a confidence undermines all confidence since such a righteousness is at best a vacillating one. No certainty comes except from the direction of a righteousness which is 'per se' and 'in toto' intact and independent of the individual's condition at any given moment.

It is when Calvin joins issue with Osiander that we see what lurid lights fall across the path of him who chooses to leave the highway of 'imputed righteousness'. Osiander introduces a kind of monstrosity termed 'essential righteousness', by which, although he designs not to abolish free righteousness, he involves it in darkness, and by that darkness deprives pious minds of a serious sense of the grace of Christ. He is led along this line partly by misconceptions about the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit. Were he to realise that the bond of unity between the believer and Christ is the secret agency of the Spirit he would not speak as if the divine essence is transfused into men when Christ is united to the sinner. He believes that man is substantially right-

¹ G. 1 Jn. 1.7.

eous in God by an infused essence as well as quality. When he says that not only Christ but the Father and the Spirit dwell in the believer he does not specify the mode of dwelling, namely that the Father and the Spirit are in Christ, and so in Him we possess God entire. According to him man is not justified by the mere grace of the Mediator, nor is righteousness simply or entirely offered him in His Person, but he is made a partaker of divine righteousness when God is essentially united to him and makes him as it were a part of Himself. (III.11.5.)

Osiander makes the common mistake of giving two meanings to the word 'justify' - the second being "to make just". So that righteousness is not a free imputation, but the holiness and integrity which the divine essence dwelling in us inspires. quite rightly he avers that God does not leave those whom He justifies exactly in the condition in which He found them but transforms them by His Spirit. But because justification and sanctification are both found in Christ it no more means that they are identical and interchangeable than that the brightness and the heat of the sun are identical.

Because those whom God freely regards as righteous, He in fact renews to the cultivation of righteousness, Osiander confounds that free acceptance with this gift of regeneration, and contends that they are one and the same...so that two things which are perfect are viciously converted by him into one which is corrupt. (III.11.6.)

Falsely construing the work of the Spirit he also, in maintaining (quite rightly) that faith in itself does not contain the power of justifying, mistakenly suggests that

Faith is Christ - as if a vessel of clay were a treasure because gold is deposited in it. (III.11.7.) The correct conception of faith as the instrument produced by the Spirit for receiving justification would never allow of its being confounded with Christ Himself.

Confusion about the nature and work of the Spirit also accounts for his illusion about Christ's being made man's righteousness in virtue of His Divine and not His human nature. If this were true then God the Father and God the Spirit would equally be man's righteousness and there would be no distinction between Christ as Mediator and the Father and the Spirit, since there would be no meaning in Christ's being made a righteousness that existed naturally from eternity. Provided, however, it is realised that it is in virtue of Christ's perfect obedience as a Servant in His human nature that the Holy Spirit can apply His righteousness, Calvin will not deny "that Christ, as He is God and man, justifies us"; that in this sense, "this work is common also to the Father and the Holy Spirit". In this context, it is through the Spirit that "Christ is to us like a fountain, of which every man may draw and drink at his ease, and to the fill, and that by His means heavenly blessings rise and flow to us, which blessings would profit us nothing, remaining in the majesty of God, which is, as it were, a profound abyss". (III.11.9.)

Osiander again spurning the mode of the spiritual union with Christ by which the believer has fellowship of righteousness with Him, insists on a gross mixture of Christ with believers and says that, especially in the eucharist there

is an essential inhabitation of Christ within the believer. "By instilling His own righteousness into us, He makes us really righteous with Himself, since according to him (Osiander), this righteousness is as well God Himself as the probity, or holiness, or integrity of God." (III.11.10.) In these sentiments Osiander is the forerunner of all those who have misrepresented the work of the Spirit in justification by glibly using such high-sounding phrases as "infused supernature" and "divine actualisation".

The pivotal difficulty for Osiander and all whom he represents is the acceptance of the unadulterated forensic meaning of justification. Against the background of their difficulties in this respect, the twofold work of the Spirit in justification stands out clearly. He has a negative and a positive function. Negatively, as the Spirit of Grace, He breaks through the aversion to the truth that justification is by the gratuitous imputation of the righteousness of Christ; positively He creates in the sinner the confidence and assurance that he is truly justified by faith.

It is the Spirit alone who clinches in the human heart the glorious truth that 'God cares for our justification in such a way that there is nothing from our side'.¹ That "righteousness therefore is not a quality that we have to seek for, but it is that righteousness of which Moses speaks (i.e. Abraham's); it is God's favour and grace which carries us".²

¹ Sermon on Gen. 15.6. Opera XXIII. 706.

² Sermon on Gen. 15.4. Opera XXIII. 692.

"Christ was not sent to assist us in the attaining of righteousness, but to be Himself our righteousness." The Spirit makes it plain that

God of His mere gratuitous goodness is pleased to embrace the sinner, in whom He sees nothing that can move Him to mercy but wretchedness, because He sees him altogether naked and destitute of good works. He therefore seeks the cause of kindness in Himself, that thus He may affect the sinner by a sense of His goodness, and induce him, in distrust of his own works, to cast himself entirely upon His mercy for salvation...and though renewed by the Spirit of God...to look solely to the righteousness which is treasured up for him in Christ. (III.11.16.)

God justifies not partially but freely, so that the sinner can appear in the heavens as if clothed with the purity of Christ. (III.11.11.)

Wheeler Robinson¹ says² that the Medieval Catholic equivalent to "Justification by faith" is not "justification by works" but rather "the absolution pronounced by a priest" and that this difference is due to opposing conceptions of the Church. But it can be said that it is also due to different appreciation of the work of the Holy Spirit who, for Calvin at any rate, Himself produces the direct certainty in the heart of the believer that his sins are absolved.

Thus Calvin finds himself alongside all those who, down the centuries, acknowledge the centrality of forgiveness in the matter of justification, and he would recognise in the classic experiences of the saints the presence of the Spirit directing the sinner's thought out to Christ. He would say that thus was peace brought to the heart of that young monk Luther, who,

¹ The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit, p. 38.

² Following Lindsay, History of the Reformation, p. 448.

in cell and cloister, by physical and spiritual ascents had sought in vain until he was assured by the Spirit's illumination of "the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith". So it was with St. Teresa when, kneeling before the crucifix, she was overcome with a sense of her own unworthiness, and felt that she never had anything to offer to God or to sacrifice for His sake. The Crucified consoled her by saying that He gave her for her own all the pains and labours which He had borne in His Passion, that she might offer them to His Father.¹

It was the Spirit again who put into John Bunyan's turbulent mind the sentence "Thy righteousness is in heaven". Thus could he write

And methought withal I saw with the eyes of my soul Jesus Christ at God's right hand; There, I say, was my righteousness; so that whatever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, He wants my righteousness, for that was just before Him. I also saw moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ₂ Himself, The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Calvin is quite aware, of course, that one of the objections levelled against the concept of imputed and unmerited righteousness is that it nullifies the incentive to do good works because 'rewards' are not offered, and worse still, it can incite men to do evil. He deals with this opposition easily by showing that the very nature of the work

¹ Wheeler Robinson, op. cit. p. 39, quoting St. Teresa's "Interior Castle", English Translation, 1906, p. 135.

² "Grace Abounding", Section 229.

produced by the Spirit, in giving certainty of justification, is such as to lead man in sheer gratitude along the lines of loving obedience, in response to the love of Him who Himself desires to be freely worshipped and freely loved. More particularly, the faith which justifies cannot be apprehended without at the same time sanctification being apprehended. As will be shown later "Christ justifies no man without also sanctifying him". Christ as justification (or righteousness) and sanctification cannot be divided.

Since the Lord, therefore, does not grant us the enjoyment of these blessings without bestowing Himself, He bestows both at once, but never the one without the other. Thus it appears how true it is that we are justified not without, and yet not by works, since in the participation of Christ, by which we are justified is contained not less sanctification than justification. (III.16.1.)

Justification, then, as revealed by the Spirit in Christ is rich and altogether adequate in all respects and is the sovereign work of the Triune God.

The efficient cause of our salvation is placed in the love of God the Father; the material cause in the obedience of the Son; the instrumental cause in the illumination of the Spirit, that is, in faith; and the final cause in the praise of the divine goodness.

The first three are included in the 'locus classicus' of the Gospel. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The fourth is always given prominence by Calvin. He believes that his view of justification, above all, maintains unimpaired the glory of God.

The purpose of the Lord in conferring righteousness upon us in Christ, was to demonstrate His own righteousness - 'that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus'. Whosoever imagines he has any thing of his own, revels against God, and obscures His glory.... Whoso glories in himself glories against God.

The Spirit then continually works havoc on any carnal glorying on man's part that He may reiterate, and enable man to obey, the injunction - "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

(iv) Adoption; 'Insertio in Christo'; Union with Christ

In Calvin's treatment of Justification by faith, it is evident that the Holy Spirit's chief work in regard to it is to point man 'out there' towards the Righteousness in Christ; there is a pronounced objectivity and a considerable degree of 'otherness' or 'apartness'. For the purpose in hand, this is how it should be; so far so good. The distinction has been carefully drawn between Justification and Sanctification and from some perspectives they are far apart. But already there have crept in certain subjective elements which are concomitants of the forensic act of justification; the certainty of justification in the heart of the believer has been adverted to, and justifying faith has been described in terms which do not allow of its being regarded as frigid and unfruitful.

Adoption

It is, however, when we come to the work of Adoption that we arrive, as it were, at the half-way point between justification and sanctification, inasmuch as in Adoption there are both forensic and dynamic aspects. When man is justified - declared to be just - by being clothed in a righteousness not his own, he is also pronounced to be a child of God by adoption; he actually becomes a member of the spiritual family of God through the Only Begotten Son. He who is an adopted son is regenerated by the Spirit of God and is given the inward knowledge of that regeneration and of the declaratory act of God by the witness of the Spirit of adoption. In the gospel era something new happens which was not experienced in former times. The Old Testament Fathers were certain of their adoption but did not so fully as yet enjoy their privilege. 'Adoption,' like the phrase "the redemption of our body," is in Gal. 4.5, put for actual possession. As, at the last day, man receives the fruit of his redemption, so now he receives the fruit of adoption, of which the holy fathers did not partake before the coming of Christ. Calvin elaborates this in his third article in the Consensus Tigurinus (1549) in which he says,

Accordingly it must be held that Christ, being the Eternal Son of God, of the same essence and glory with the Father, put on our flesh, in order that by right of adoption, He might communicate to us what by nature was solely His own, to wit that we should be sons of God. This takes place when we, ingrafted through faith into the body of Christ and thus by the power of the Holy Spirit, are first justified by the gratuitous imputation of righteousness, and there regenerated into a new life, that, now created in the image of the heavenly Father,

we may put off the old man.

As Lilley¹ points out, "here adoption is put in its rightful Pauline position as in the order of faith posterior to sanctification and identifying the believer with Christ in the sonship that belongs to Him as the incarnate Saviour".

It has already been seen, in our treatment of faith, that in the application of salvation the Holy Spirit performs the part of a seal; this aspect of His work is of special importance in the context of adoption. When he comments on Eph. 1.13 "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise," Calvin reminds us that "no higher surety of adoption can be found than the Holy Spirit since it is He who seals the truth in the believer's heart". The true conviction which believers have of the Word of God, of their own salvation and of religion in general, does not spring from the judgment of the flesh, or from human and philosophical arguments but from the sealing of the Spirit, who imparts to their consciences such certainty as to remove all doubt. The Spirit in this connection is called the Spirit of promise since

to Him we owe it that the promise of salvation is not made to us in vain. As God promises in His Word, 'that He will be to us a Father', so He gives to us the evidence of having adopted us by the Holy Spirit... In themselves, indeed, the promises of God are not weak; but until we are supported by the testimony of the Spirit, we never rest upon them with unshaken confidence.

Calvin makes the same point in writing on 2 Cor. 1.21 -
God's anointing and sealing -

¹ Principles of Protestantism, p. 68.

God by pouring down upon us the heavenly grace of the Spirit, does, in this manner, seal upon our hearts the certainty of His own word... For as the Spirit, in bearing witness of our adoption, is our security, and by confirming the faith of the promises, is the seal, so it is on good grounds that He is called an earnest, because it is owing to Him that the covenant of God is ratified on both sides, which would, but for this, have hung in suspense... We must observe that all that have not the Holy Spirit as a witness, so as to return their 'Amen' to God, when calling them to an assured hope of salvation, do on false grounds assume the name of Christians.

There is yet a warmer and more intimate aspect of the Spirit's work, namely when, in persuading the believer that he is the son of God, He enables him unashamedly to call God his Father.

The adoption must have preceded the testimony of adoption given by the Holy Spirit; but the effect is the sign of the cause. In venturing to call God your Father, you have the advice and direction of the Spirit of Christ; therefore it is certain that you are the sons of God... The Spirit... gives to us a well-founded belief that God regards us with a father's love.¹

The true Christian finds that the cry "Abba, Father" wells up spontaneously from his heart because the Spirit Himself - the Spirit of the very Son of God - bears witness with his spirit that he is the child of God.

He (Paul in Rom. 8.16) does not simply say, that God's Spirit is a witness to our spirit, but he adopts a compound verb, which might be rendered 'contest', (*contestatur*) were it not that *contestatio* (*contestatio*) has a different meaning in Latin. But Paul means that the Spirit of God gives us such a testimony, that when He is our guide and teacher, our spirit is made assured of the adoption of God: for our mind of its own self, without the preceding testimony of the Spirit,

¹ C. Gal. 4.6.

could not convey to us this assurance...when the Spirit testifies to us, that we are the children of God, He at the same time pours into our hearts such confidence, that we venture to call God our Father.¹

In reply to those who object that many unbelievers make a profession of having God as their Father - sometimes more confidently than real Christians, Calvin says that in the genuine case it is no

idle boasting, or the proud opinion of himself which any man may entertain, but the testimony of a pious conscience which accompanies the new birth... Unbelievers - ungodly men have no experience of this certainty since it is of the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him'... It is not what the persons themselves, in the foolish judgment of the flesh, may venture to believe, but what God declares in their hearts by His Spirit.²

The Spirit of adoption will manifest its presence in a resultant liberty in prayer in which only regenerate children of God can truly indulge.

Since the confidence of the heart alone opens our mouth, except the Spirit testifies to our heart respecting the paternal love of God, our tongues would be dumb, so that they could utter no prayers. For we must ever hold fast this principle, - that we do not rightly pray to God, unless we are surely persuaded in our hearts, that He is³ our Father, when we so call Him with our lips.³

The Spirit of adoption also opens up man to the guidance and refashioning of God (as we shall see later).

We are called the children of God, not only because we resemble Him, but because He governs us by His Spirit, and because Christ lives and is vigorous in

¹ C. Rom. 8.16.

² C. Gal. 4.6.

³ C. Rom. 8.16.

us, so as to conform us to the image of His Father.¹

Moreover, good works are the natural outcome expected by God in those whom He adopts.

The sons of God are designated by the duty which they ought perpetually to observe, that His reason for adopting us is, that we may reverence Him as a father. Hence if we would not deprive ourselves of the privilege of adoption, we must always strive in the direction of our calling...because He recognises the true badges of sons in those only who are directed to good by His Spirit. (III.17.6.)

Not only so, but the outflow in good conduct of his relation of adoption is in itself a corroboration to the believer himself of the reality of the new relationship.

The Christian mind...must dwell entirely on the free promise of justification. But we forbid no believer to confirm and support this faith by the signs of the divine favour towards him. For if when we call to mind the gifts which God has bestowed upon us, they are like rays of the divine countenance, by which we are enabled to behold the light of His goodness; much more is this the case with the gift of good works, which shows that we have received the Spirit of adoption. (III.14.18.)

"Implanting"

Another representation of the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation is given by Calvin in terms of His ingrafting or implanting the believer in Christ - 'insertio in Christo'.²

¹ C. Jn. 3.44. ² III.2.35. "Christ, when He produces faith in us by the agency of His Spirit, at the same time ingrafts us into His body, that we may become partakers of all blessings. C.f. also III.14.6. "...Though we may be redeemed by Christ, still, until we are ingrafted into union with Him by the calling of the Father, we are darkness, the heirs of death, and the enemies of God."

His comment on Rom. 6.5,6 "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" is that

grafting designates not only a conformity of example, but a secret union, by which we are joined to Him; so that He, reviving us by His Spirit, transfers His own virtue to us. Hence as the graft has the same life or death in common with the tree into which it is ingrafted, so it is reasonable that we should be partakers of the life no less than of the death of Christ...(But) between the grafting of trees, and this which is spiritual, a disparity will soon meet us: in the former the graft draws its aliment from the root, but retains its own nature in the fruit; but in the latter not only we derive the vigour and nourishment of life from Christ, but we also pass from our own to His nature... As long as we are children of Adam...we can do nothing else but sin; but...being grafted in Christ, we are delivered from this miserable thralldom; not that we immediately cease entirely to sin, but that we become at last victorious in the contest.

As would be expected Calvin develops this theme in commenting on the allegory of the Vine in John 15. His point there also is that no man has the nature of a vine till he is implanted in Christ. "So then the Father is the first author of all blessings, who plants us with His hand:¹ but the commencement of life is in Christ, since we begin to take root in Him." The Hand of God however not only plants the believer in Christ but also 'prunes' or cleanses him. This He does through doctrine or the preaching of the Word. "Not that the word proceeding from the mouth of a man has so great efficacy, but, so far as Christ works in the heart by the Spirit, the Word itself is the instrument of cleansing."² Further, the

¹ C.f. III.1.3. Spirit and Hand.

² C. Jn. 15.3.

Spirit, through faith in and adherence to the gospel, keeps the believer abiding in the Vine, wherefrom he derives (and desires) his power, since he does not will or desire "riches, or honours, or any thing of that nature, which the flesh foolishly desires, but the vital sap of the Holy Spirit, which enables him (Lat. them) to bear fruit".¹

Thus we pass on to what is held in high regard by Calvin, namely the 'unio mystica' ('mystical union') with Christ, in which the Holy Spirit plays an indispensable part. Wheeler Robinson² draws attention to the important fact that

when we speak simply of fellowship with either God or Christ, there is always a theological lacuna which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is designed to fill - 'through Christ we have our access in one Spirit unto the Father'. It is in the Spirit that man as sinner enters into the 'mystical' union with Christ, and in turn, Christ's bounties are made his own.

To this union alone it is owing that, in regard to us, the Saviour has not come in vain. To this is to be referred that sacred marriage, by which we become bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh, and so one with Him (Eph. 5.30), for it is by the Spirit alone that He unites Himself to us. By the same grace and energy of the Spirit we become His members, so that He keeps us under Him and we in our turn possess Him. (III.1.3.)

Kuyper³ maintains that "although Calvin may have been the most rigid among the reformers, yet not one of them has presented this 'unio mystica', this spiritual union with Christ, so incessantly, so tenderly, and with such holy fire as he". Calvin certainly adheres to what Kuyper holds as ideal, namely,

¹ C. Jn. 15.7. ² Op. cit. pp. 40 ff.

³ The Work of the Holy Spirit, pp. 324, 5.

to the necessary connection (and inter-relation) between regeneration and the 'mystical' union; and it can never be said of his teaching on this subject that it is "anti-Scriptural, eradicates brotherly love, and begets spiritual pride".¹

Calvin recognises the invisibility of this union and its mysterious quality which makes it difficult to discourse upon it in too familiar terms. Nevertheless he wishes to emphasise beyond dispute its reality, meanwhile bewaring the theological blunders so easily committed in this context.

To that union (says Calvin) of the head and members, the residence of Christ in our hearts, in fine, the mystical union, we assign the highest rank, Christ when He becomes ours making us partners with Him in the gifts with which He was endued. Hence we do not view Him as at a distance and without us, but as we have put Him on, and been ingrafted into His body, He deigns to make us one with Himself, and, therefore, we glory in having a fellowship of righteousness with Him. (III.11.10.)

This fellowship is a vital one for "as the soul enlivens the body, so Christ imparts life to His members. It is a remarkable sentiment that believers live out of themselves, that is, they live in Christ; which can only be accomplished by holding real and actual communication with Him". The believer, by faith, inwardly perceives in the conscience by the power of the Spirit, that he lives in the heavenlies in Christ; "while we live in the world, we at the same time live in heaven; not only because our Head is there, but because, in virtue of union, we enjoy a life in common with Him."²

¹ op. cit. p. 322.

² C. Gal. 2.20.

Calvin by no means, however, implies that there is a divine-human nature formed in the believer as a result of this union or that the divine nature of Christ is transfused into the believer. In commenting on our Lord's High Priestly prayer in John 17 where reference is made to His union with the Father and the similar union with believers, Calvin counsels us¹ that Christ "does not speak simply of His Divine essence, but that He is called one, as regards His mediatorial office, and in so far as He is our Head". We must therefore "view Him as He is the Head of the Church, and unite Him with His members". The power of the unity of the Son with the Father must be "diffused through the whole body of believers. Hence, too, we infer that we are one with the Son of God; not because He conveys His substance to us, but because, by the power of His Spirit, He imparts to us His life and all the blessings which He has received from the Father".

Calvin never tires of reminding us that it is the sinner who is united to Christ and that despite the reality of the secret union, man in himself remains a sinner, and is deemed righteous in the sight of God only in Christ and not in himself. Nevertheless, as we have seen in his discussion of faith (III.2.24.) the sinner's union with Christ is the ground of an eternal confidence and a present joy.

It will never do to separate Christ from us, nor us from Him; but we must, with both hands, keep firm hold of that alliance by which He has rivetted us to Himself... Christ is not external to us, but dwells in us; and not only unites us to Himself by an undivided bond of fellowship, but by a wondrous communion brings us daily into closer connection, until He becomes altogether one with us.

¹ Verse 21.

CHAPTER V

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE INDIVIDUAL

2. THE CHRISTIAN LIVING THE LIFE

CHAPTER V

The Holy Spirit and the Individual

2. The Christian living the Life

(i) "Sanctification"

The Holy Spirit has been seen to play an indispensable part in relation to the objective ground, and the initiatory stages, of admission into Salvation. Calvin has already said enough to show that 'Justification' is not a 'cul de sac' and that 'adoption', 'implanting' and 'union' bear a vital relation to the subsequent, progressive and unfolding life of the Christian. He has, however, more to say about the Spirit's contribution to the Christian's enlarging experience of (not only an imputed righteousness but also) an 'imparted' righteousness of Christ. In the realisation of sanctification through the Spirit two sides are clearly discernible, namely God's side and man's side.

A. The Divine Resources

We shall follow Calvin's assessment and valuation of the Divine Resources of the Holy Spirit of man's sanctification as he describes the Word Incarnate and the Word written; the reciprocal necessity of each other of the Holy Spirit and the Person of Christ; Christ Himself our Sanctification; Christ's death to sin and resurrection to life and the victory thereby attained; the exhortation to enter into the Rest of God - to rest and to abide in God; the continual drawing on the Holy Spirit and the constant indwelling of the Spirit; the fruit

of the Spirit and, lastly, His gifts.

We are quite accustomed by now to Calvin's reiterated emphasis on God's side of the whole work of re-making man. Although it sometimes appears as an over-emphasis which seems to leave nothing for man to do, it will be seen that this is not the case, but that Calvin wishes only to cut away, as much as possible, any ground for man's boasting.

Lest there should be formed the dangerous misconception that the powerful, purifying work of the Spirit is performed in a vague manner, as it were in a vacuum, Calvin lays stress on the fact that He works in a concrete relationship to Christ (as found in the Word of God - the Bible). By this reciprocal dependence - of the Spirit on Christ and of Christ on the Spirit, the dangers of wrong ideas concerning both are avoided. Grin¹ has this in mind when he tells us to "remember the elementary and fundamental truths: Christ lives in us by the Holy Spirit, the only means, we believe, by which we are safeguarded from a false mysticism of His Presence, from a sort of illumination which is not according to the New Testament, and from other aberrations. Moreover it is the only means whereby Christ enters 'whole' into our life and is made to be something different from a mere memory from the past".

Calvin's manner of expressing it is found in his commentary on Ephesians 3.17 - 'that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith'.

¹ Op. cit. p. 177.

It is a mistake to imagine that the Spirit can be obtained without obtaining Christ; and it is equally foolish and absurd to dream that we can receive Christ without the Spirit. Both doctrines must be believed. We are partakers of the Holy Spirit, in proportion to the intercourse which we maintain with Christ; for the Spirit will be found nowhere but in Christ, on whom He is said, on that account, to have rested... But neither can Christ be separated from His Spirit; for then He would be said to be dead, and to have lost all His power... Faith is not a distant view, but a warm embrace, of Christ, by which He dwells in us, and we are filled with the Divine Spirit.

Similarly¹ "those in whom the Spirit reigns not belong not to Christ...for they who separate Christ from His own Spirit make Him like a dead image or a carcase"; and² "what he (Paul) had before said of the Spirit he says now of Christ, in order that the mode of Christ's dwelling in us might be intimated; for as by the Spirit He consecrates us as temples to Himself, so by the same He dwells in us". We are told again³ that

we receive the Spirit in order that we may enjoy Christ's blessings. For what does He bestow on us? That we may be washed by the blood of Christ, that sin may be blotted out in us by His death, that our old man may be crucified, that His resurrection may be efficacious in forming us again to newness of life and, in short, that we may become partakers of His benefits. Nothing, therefore, is bestowed on us by the Spirit apart from Christ, but He takes it from Christ, that He may communicate it to us... The Spirit enriches us with no other than the riches of Christ, that He may display His glory in all things.

And Christ⁴ "dwells in the disciples by His Spirit... Thus the grace of the Spirit is a mirror in which Christ wishes to be seen by us".

¹ C. Rom. 8.9. ² C. Rom. 8.10.

³ C. Jn. 16.14. ⁴ C. Jn. 16.18.

A kindred truth is underlined in his comment on 1 Cor.

6.11 -

the blood of Christ is the procuring cause of our cleansing: righteousness and sanctification come to us through His death and resurrection. But, as the cleansing effected by Christ, and the attainment of righteousness are of no avail except to those who have been made partakers of those blessings by the influence of the Holy Spirit, it is with propriety that He makes mention of the Spirit in connection with Christ. Christ then is the source of all blessings to us; from Him we obtain all things; but Christ Himself with all His blessings, is communicated to us by the Spirit.

Thus it appears that the Spirit cannot work on His own, any more than Christ can operate on His own. Further, the Spirit cannot present Christ's Person as it were 'piecemeal' but only 'whole', - complete in all His benefits. So that the faithful¹ should "learn to embrace Him, not only for justification, but also for sanctification; as He has been given to us for both these purposes, lest they rend Him asunder by their mutilated faith". A wholesome faith therefore

you cannot apprehend without at the same time apprehending sanctification... Christ justifies no man without also sanctifying him... Would you then obtain justification in Christ? You must previously possess Christ. But you cannot possess Him without being made a partaker of His sanctification: for Christ cannot be divided... In the participation of Christ, by which we are justified, is contained not less sanctification than justification.

When Paul in writing to the Corinthians² calls Christ our sanctification, Calvin says that he means

¹ C. Rom. 8.13.

² C. 1 Cor. 1.30.

that we who are otherwise unholy by nature, are by His Spirit renewed unto holiness, that we may serve God. From this also we infer, that we cannot be justified freely through faith alone without at the same time living holily. For these fruits of grace are connected together, as it were, by an indissoluble tie, so that he who attempts to sever them does in a manner tear Christ to pieces. Let therefore the man who seeks to be justified through Christ, by God's unmerited goodness, consider that this cannot be attained without His taking Him at the same time for sanctification.

Earlier on in his commentary on this chapter¹ Calvin claims that the term 'sanctification' denotes separation.

This takes place in us when we are regenerated by the Spirit to newness of life, that we may serve God and not the world. For while by nature we are unholy, the Spirit consecrates us to God. As, however, this is effected when we are ingrafted into the body of Christ, apart from whom there is nothing but pollution, and as it is also by Christ, and not from any other source that the Spirit is conferred, it is with good reason that he says that we are sanctified in Christ, inasmuch as it is by Him that we cleave to God, and in Him become new creatures.

Calvin adopts a similar approach in one of his famous 'Tracts', namely his 'Reply to Sadoleto'² where he submits that

if he who has obtained justification possesses Christ and at the same time Christ never is where His Spirit is not, it is obvious that gratuitous righteousness is necessarily connected with regeneration. Therefore if you would duly understand how inseparable faith and works are, look to Christ, who, as the Apostle teaches, has been given to us for justification and for sanctification. Wherever therefore that righteousness of faith, which we maintain to be gratuitous is, there too Christ is, and where Christ is, there too is the Spirit of holiness, who regenerates the soul to newness of life. On the contrary, where zeal for integrity and holiness is not in vigour, there neither is the Spirit of Christ nor Christ Himself; and wherever Christ is not,

¹ Verse 2.

² Calvin's Tracts, Vol. 1, p. 43.

there is no righteousness, nay there is no faith; for faith cannot apprehend Christ for righteousness without the Spirit of sanctification... Since... Christ regenerates to a blessed life...and so trains them by His Spirit into obedience to His will, there is no ground to complain that by our doctrine, lust is left with loosened reins.

As has been mentioned, sanctification in Christ by the Spirit is mediated by, closely allied to, and never divorced from, the truth of God in the Word. This is made explicit when Calvin comments on John 17.17 - 'Sanctify them by thy truth'.

This sanctification (he says) includes the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; that is when God renews us by His Spirit, and confirms in us the grace of renewal, and continues it to the end... He points out the means of sanctification, and not without reason; for there are fanatics who indulge in much useless prattle about sanctification, but who neglect the truth of God, by which He consecrates us to Himself. Again, as there are others who chatter quite as foolishly about the truth, and yet disregard the word, Christ expressly says that the truth, by which God sanctifies His sons, is not to be found any where else than in the word.

Calvin writes on this point in one of his letters¹ when he reminds his correspondent that

by contemplating the face of Jesus Christ in the mirror of the gospel, we may conform ourselves to Him from glory to glory. Whereby the apostle means that in proportion as we draw nearer to Jesus Christ and know Him more intimately, the grace and virtue of His Spirit will at the same time grow and be multiplied in us.

Our Lord's words later on in His prayer,² says Calvin, explain

¹ Vol. III. No. CCCXLIII.

² Jn. 17, verse 19.

more clearly from what source that sanctification flows, which is completed in us by the doctrine of the Gospel. It is because He consecrated Himself to the Father, that His holiness might come to us; for as the blessing on the first-fruits is spread over the whole harvest, so the Spirit of God cleanses us by the holiness of Christ, and makes us partakers of it. Nor is this done by imputation only, for in that respect He is said to have been made to us righteousness; but He is likewise said to have been made to us sanctification because He has, so to speak, presented us to His Father in His own person, that we may be renewed to true holiness by His Spirit. Besides, though this sanctification belongs to the whole life of Christ, yet the highest illustration of it was given in the sacrifice of His death; for then He showed Himself to be the true High Priest, by consecrating the temple, the altar, all the vessels, and the people, by the power of His Spirit.

From this quotation we can pass on quite naturally to consider the Spirit's connection with the fact that Christ died to sin and rose again victorious over sin and its significance for sanctification. Paul's statement in Rom. 6.9 that 'death no more rules over Him' seems, says Calvin, to imply that

death once ruled over Christ; and indeed when He gave Himself up to death for us, He in a manner surrendered and subjected Himself to its power; it was, however, in such a way that it was impossible that He should be kept bound by its pangs, so as to succumb or to be swallowed up by them. He, therefore, by submitting to its dominion, as it were, for a moment, destroyed it for ever... Christ, who now vivifies the faithful by His Spirit, or breathes His own life into them by His secret power from heaven, was freed from the dominion of death when He arose, that by virtue of the same dominion He might render free all His people.¹ He 'died that He might destroy death...' He is not said to die to sin, so as to cease from it, as the words must be taken when applied to us, but that He underwent death on account of sin, that having made Himself (ἀντιλαμπρον) a ransom, He might annihilate the power and dominion of sin... He died once...and we are said properly to die only once, that is, when Christ, reconciling us

¹ Verse 10.

by His blood to the Father, regenerates us at the same time by the power of His Spirit... The faithful ought to feel assured that they are through the kindness of Christ dead as to the flesh, and that the same Christ will preserve them in newness of life to the end... For¹ except Christ were to slay sin in us at once to the end, His grace would by no means be sure and durable.

God's side of the matter is farther emphasised in the comment on Gal. 5.24 where Calvin maintains that "the word 'crucified' is employed to point out that the mortification of the flesh is the effect of the Cross of Christ. This work does not belong to man". Calvin is in no doubt then, as to the once-for-all triumph of Christ over sin's power and its availability through the Spirit to the individual.

Victory has been given to us (he announces²)... inasmuch as Christ has in His own person abolished sin...and farther, because He has already begun to make us partakers of all those benefits. For though we still carry about with us the remains of sin, it nevertheless does not reign in us: though it still stings us, it does not do so fatally because its edge is blunted, so that it does not penetrate into the vitals of the soul... Though the remains of sin still dwell in us, yet the Spirit who raised up Christ from the dead is life, because of righteousness.

In the light then, of Christ's death to sin and His resurrection to newness of life, and the already procured victory, the Spirit's next declaration, says Calvin, concerns the 'Rest' of God, and the corollary, the believer's rest in God. Writing on the Sabbath Rest of the Fourth Commandment (II.8.29.) he says that

¹ Verse 11.

² C. 1 Cor. 15.57.

if our sanctification consists in the mortification of our own will, the analogy between the external sign and the thing signified is most appropriate. We must rest entirely in order that God may work in us; we must resign our own will, yield up our heart, and abandon all the lusts of the flesh. In short we must desist from all the acts of our own mind, that God working in us, we may rest in Him.

He farther describes this in expounding¹ the "spiritual rest to which God daily invites us". 'Entered into His rest' -

This is a definition of that perpetual Sabbath in which there is the highest felicity, when there will be a likeness between men and God, to whom they will be united. For whatever the philosophers may have ever said of the 'summum bonum', it was nothing but cold and vain, for they confined man to himself, while it is necessary for us to go out of ourselves to find happiness. The 'summum bonum' of man is nothing else but union with God; this is attained when we are formed according to Him as our exemplar. Now this conformation...takes place when we rest from our works. It hence at length follows, that man becomes happy by self denial... Man... should allow God to live in him, that he should abstain from his own works, so as to give place to God to work. We must indeed confess, that then only is our life rightly formed when it becomes subject to God... He cannot work in us until we rest.

Calvin also, of course, gives due prominence to the Fourth Gospel's mode of expressing this truth, namely by the figure of the Vine,² where it is shown how imperative it is for the believer to 'abide in the Vine' if he is to realise his true nature and if he is to bear fruit. As had already been shown³ the Spirit is the sole conveyer of the resources. In our Lord's exhortation 'Abide in Me', He proves, says Calvin⁴ "that He did not begin the work of our salvation for the purpose of leaving it imperfect in the middle of the

¹ Heb. 4.10.

² John 15.

³ Ch. 4.b.iv.

⁴ C. Jn. 15.4.

course", in that "He promises that His Spirit will always be efficacious in us, if we do not prevent Him".

In a variety of passages Calvin underlines the encouraging fact that the Holy Spirit is continually available to be drawn upon.

The Holy Spirit is a continually flowing fountain and therefore there is no danger that they who have been renewed by spiritual grace shall be dried up. And therefore although we thirst throughout our whole life, yet it is certain that we have not received the Holy Spirit for a single day, or for any short period, but as a perennial fountain which will never fail us.¹

We know that our souls are fed by the doctrine of the gospel, when it is efficacious in us by the power of the Spirit... Believing souls feel that enduring power when they are made partakers of the power of the Holy Spirit in His gifts, which is not of short duration, but, on the contrary, never fails.²

There is a striking reminiscence of Calvin's truth here in Bunyan's graphic picture³ of Christian in the Interpreter's house:- 'Then I saw in my dream, that the Interpreter took Christian by the hand, and led him into a place where was a fire burning against a wall, and one standing by it, always casting much water upon it, to quench it; yet did the fire burn higher and hotter.

'Then said Christian, What means this?

'The Interpreter answered, This fire is the work of grace which is wrought in the heart; He that casts water upon it to extinguish and put it out, is the devil; but in that thou seest the fire notwithstanding burns higher and hotter, thou

¹ C. Jn. 4.13. C.f. C. Jn. 7.38.

² C. Jn. 6.27. ³ Pilgrim's Progress.

shalt also see the reason for that. So he had him about to the backside of the wall, where he saw a man with a vessel of oil in his hand, of the which he did also continually cast (but secretly) into the fire.

'Then said Christian, What means this?

'The Interpreter answered, This is Christ, who continually, with the oil of His grace, maintains the work already begun in the heart; by the means of which, notwithstanding what the devil can do, the souls of His people prove gracious still.'

The comment is hardly needed that the Holy Spirit, as the 'oil', unceasingly provides the replenishing fuel for the flame of devotion in the Christian's heart.

The New Testament, says Calvin, presents the same truth in another form when it says that the Holy Spirit is not only always available to be drawn upon by the believer, but that He also continually dwells in the Christian. In a letter to Viret, Calvin denounces parts of Castellio's new translation of the Bible in which he corrupts the meaning of certain passages; e.g. 'The Spirit of God which dwells in us,' he has changed to 'haunt in us', when to 'haunt', in French, does not mean to 'dwell', but is used to signify to 'frequent'.¹ What Calvin here says, more probably in the cause of purity of language, he elsewhere says in defence of sound doctrine and experience, namely that the Spirit is no spasmodic visitor but a resident purifier of the inmost recesses of the soul.

¹ Letter XXIV. ubi habitur: L'esperit de Dieu, qui habite en nous, mutavit; hante en nous, quum hanter non habitare, sed frequentare Gallis significet.

As would be expected, the consequence of the fact that God, by the Spirit, can be 'rested' and 'abided' in; that the Spirit is at the believer's disposal to be drawn upon and to indwell him, is that all spiritual fruit will be attributed directly to the Spirit. In a passage already quoted (III.1.3.) Calvin tells us that by the Spirit's divine inspiration God "so breathes divine life into us, that we are no longer acted upon by ourselves, but ruled by His motion and agency, so that everything good in us is the fruit of His grace". In like manner, in commenting on 'Not I, but the grace of God in me',¹ he makes it plain that

we have nothing that is good, but what the Lord has graciously given us, that we do nothing good but what He worketh in us, - not that we do nothing ourselves, but that we do nothing without being influenced - that is, under the guidance and impulse of the Holy Spirit.

"There are no pious affections that do not proceed from the Spirit of God."² God "dwells in us by His Holy Spirit, by whose power our carnal desires are daily more and more mortified, and we are sanctified; that is consecrated to the Lord for true purity of life, having our hearts moulded to obey His law". (III.14.9.)

Calvin's letters abound in references to the 'Fruit of the Spirit'. He is ever desirous of his correspondents' being filled by the Holy Spirit and exhibiting His graces. To mention only a few: "...fill you with His Holy Spirit who gives prudence and virtue and brings peace, joy and contentment."³

¹ 1 Cor. 15.10.

² C. 2 Cor. 8.17.

³ Letter CCXCV.

"...Neither able to think...do good...except by the Holy Spirit." It is the Spirit who produces wisdom, uprightness, simplicity, humility and constancy.¹ When Calvin exhorts them to steadfastness even in the face of death he is convinced of the power of the Spirit. "...The courage which you have in assembling in His name as a flock is a work of His Spirit."² "Believe that the power of His Holy Spirit will not fail you till you have surmounted every difficulty."³

Before leaving what has been described as being more especially God's side of sanctification, and passing on to what is more particularly man's side, a word must be said about the 'Gifts' of the Spirit. Calvin easily disposes of many of the difficulties that have gathered around a number of New Testament references to the special receiving of the Spirit at a time subsequent to a believer's confession of faith, or to the 'baptism of the Holy Ghost',⁴ by regarding the 'gifts' as primarily exclusive spiritual manifestations for the early Church. Indeed the whole integrated hierarchy of 'gifts' - 'wisdom,' 'knowledge,' 'faith,', 'healing,' 'miracles,' 'prophecy,' 'discerning of spirits,' 'divers kinds of tongues,' 'interpretation of tongues' - was intended to be maintained intact, and as a harmonious unity, and an encouraging body of phenomena, by the young fellowship.

The interpretation given by Calvin of the receiving of the Spirit by the believers in Samaria⁵ is that

¹ Letter CCCCLXXV.

² Letter CCCCXIV.

³ Letter DIII.

⁴ C.f. Acts 19.2.

⁵ C. Acts 8.16.

Luke speaks not in this place of the common grace of the Spirit, whereby God doth regenerate us, that we may be His children, but of those singular gifts wherewith God would have certain endued at the beginning of the gospel to beautify Christ's kingdom... Forasmuch as the Samaritans were already endued with the Spirit of adoption, the excellent graces of the Spirit are heaped upon them, in which God showed to His Church, for a time as it were, the visible presence of His Spirit, that He might establish for ever the authority of His gospel, and also testify that His Spirit shall be always the governor and director of the faithful.

Calvin, evidently then, believes that these gifts are temporary and for a limited purpose but that the other less spectacularly dramatic spiritual gifts are perennial and at all times available by the Spirit for the believer's sanctification.

B. The Human Response.

No one can accuse Calvin of belittling the work of the Holy Spirit or the adequacy of God's part in 'sanctification'. He would be the first to admit, however, that intellectually or theoretically, and especially in practical experience, a clear-cut bifurcation cannot be made between the part of the Spirit of God and man's own share in the matter. So that it appears that, in the sanctification of the believer, it is not a case of either-or but rather of both-and; not either God's or man's work but, in the paradox of grace, both God's and man's. Calvin thus avoids the extremes of a spiritual absolutism on the one hand and those of an equally invidious moralistic humanism on the other: his is a Robust Realism in the spiritual sphere, arrived at via a humility which recog-

nises and honours the Divine majesty and initiative, and at the same time acknowledges the often, all-too-real rigours of human experience.

Calvin has no illusions about being 'sanctified' once and for all in a passive sense, in such a way as to leave no room for further action. He would find it extremely difficult to agree with someone who described his regenerate life-history as being fraught with failure and frustration, weakness and sin until the arrival of a crucial moment and experience when (in what might be called a 'holiness' meeting) he was 'sanctified simply by faith' in as real, and as chronologically distinct a sense, as he was formerly 'justified by faith', and thereby came to the end of all struggle.

He would be in equal disagreement with someone who, on the other hand, sought to rid himself of the inhibitions and the thwarting grip of sin merely by self-effort and relentless discipline, being morbidly engaged in a conflict from which the notes of the exultant triumph of Another are conspicuously absent. Struggle there certainly is, but not of this sort.

Calvin sees and safeguards the truth enshrined in both these conflicting approaches and avoids their dangers. No one acknowledges more than he the necessity of faith in the omnipotence of Christ through the Holy Spirit and that it is He who is at work in any real victory, and that holiness is obtained by looking to Him rather than to self. He warns, however, against any snare of conceiving 'holiness' or

'sanctification' by faith as having a finality which does not belong to it, as if a transaction has been undertaken which results in an actual and factual holiness of life and which precludes all further advance in holiness. Such a conception he knows inevitably leads to a collapse in disillusionment when the Christian sees that sin has by no means ceased to attack him and to vanquish him. On the other hand he agrees with the rigourist when the latter recognises the reality of the sin-struggle, meanwhile reminding him of his danger of over-emphasising the resources of the Enemy and of under-estimating the all-conquering reserves of the Spirit.

In Calvin then, there is found a realistic combination of the two approaches. In sanctification it is the Holy Spirit who works in man, and yet, in a real sense, man acts through the Holy Spirit. Calvin does not call upon man to "Let go and let God" and thus to embark on an unrelieved and de-humanising passivity in which his will, personality and whole being is swallowed up in God and rendered inoperative. Rather his injunction to him is, in effect, to "Let God be God"; that is, in a conscious recognition of the objective majesty of God's resources in Christ by the Spirit, to allow that Spirit to act upon and through his will to the voluntary and conscious performance of the Divine will. Man's responsibility is thus by no means unreal, but, as it has been quaintly expressed, is his positive, active and deliberate 'response to the Divine Ability'. His is a call to an unrelenting and courageous, high life of active advance in the manly confidence of the Spirit who need harbour no fears nor brook any opposition.

By the in-wrought power of the Spirit, Calvin need not adopt Peer Gynt's maxim "Do not go through - go around"; in himself he would 'go around', in the Spirit he 'goes through'. In practice then, through the Spirit's strength, he who in himself is utter weakness, is more than conqueror - a conqueror who in no sense is among the spectators but is in the arena. The Spirit for him, with him and in him - that is the secret of his success. Thus it is that (to use another figure) he can be as one who prays in a storm and keeps on rowing, his muscles and desire and will to row being 'strong in the strength which God supplies through His eternal Son' by His Holy Spirit.

Before, however, the Christian's life in the larger sphere of the world and its manifold relationships, and the duties which face him there, are considered, attention must be given to Calvin's 'anthropology' of the Christian - to what he describes as proceeding inside the life of the individual Christian. There is in progress, says Calvin, in the regenerate, a 'battle royal'. The Scriptural basis for this he finds in Romans 7 which he interprets throughout as being a description of the believer's experience rather than that of the unregenerate. Calvin accords with Luther's characterisation of the Christian as being "simul (et semper) justus et peccator" - at the same time (and always - i.e. throughout his life) both righteous and a sinner. In a significant sense 'peccator' never becomes 'justus'; indeed 'peccator' often perpetrates things of which 'justus' despairs.

Men (says Calvin¹)...otherwise given very godlily, do break out into evil works who have not their heart corrupt inwardly with poison. We know that hypocrisy is engendered in man's nature; but when as the Spirit of God doth shine, we are so blinded in our vices, that we nourish them within as if it were some hidden bundle.

Furthermore even

the best thing which can be produced by them (i.e. believers) is always tainted and corrupted by the impurity of the flesh, and has, as it were, some mixture of dross in it. Let the holy servant of God, I say, select from the whole course of his life the action which he deems most excellent, and let him ponder it in all its parts; he will doubtless find in it something that savours of the rottenness of the flesh...the stains by which the works of the righteous are blemished are by no means unapparent... Even saints cannot perform one work which, if judged on its own merits, is not deserving of condemnation. (III.14.9.)

This contradictory and disrupting condition and paradoxical situation of being 'justus et peccator' takes its rise from the fact that there are in the regenerate man two completely distinct and incompatible elements - flesh and spirit. When man is regenerated by the Spirit of God he becomes a new creature; this consists in his being given a new 'nature', a new principle of life, a new vital element. Whereas before the 'flesh' alone was 'alive' he now possesses two live 'natures'. Expounding Paul's Rom. 7.18, Calvin says that

under the term 'flesh', he ever includes all that human nature is, everything in man, except the sanctification of the Spirit. In the same manner, by the term 'spirit', which is commonly opposed to the flesh, he means that part of the soul which the Spirit of God has so re-formed, and purified from

¹ C. Acts 8.23.

corruption, that God's image shines forth in it. Then both terms, flesh as well as spirit, belong to the soul; but the latter to that part which is renewed, and the former to that which still retains its natural character.

In a similar manner Calvin¹ clearly distinguishes between the 'inner' or 'inward man' and the 'members' (in which another law wars against the Spiritual law).

The inner man is not simply the soul, but that spiritual part which has been regenerated by God; and the members signify the other remaining part; for as the soul is the superior, and the body the inferior part of man, so the spirit is superior to the flesh. Then as the spirit takes the place of the soul in man, and the flesh, which is the corrupt and polluted soul, that of the body, the former has the name of the inner man, and the latter has the name of members... it is called the inner by way of excellency; for it possesses the heart and the secret feelings, while the desires of the flesh are vagrant, and are, as it were, on the outside of man. Doubtless it is the same thing as though one compared heaven to earth.

Thus spirit and flesh, inner man and members exist, and are held together, as it were, in a 'hypostatic' union. They are like a Jekyll and Hyde co-existing in one person, except, with the significant difference, that the flesh never becomes spirit, and the 'members' are never transformed into the 'inner man', the 'old nature' or 'old man' as such never becomes the 'new man'. In the Christian victory through the Spirit, it is not a case of the transformation of one into the other, but rather of the defeat of the one by the other. Our Lord hints at this in the upper room incident of the washing of the disciples' feet, about which Calvin writes²

¹ C. Rom. 7.22.

² C. Jn. 13.10.

The children of God are not altogether regenerated on the first day, so as to aim at nothing but the heavenly life; but, on the contrary, the remains of the flesh continue to dwell in them, with which they maintain a continued struggle throughout their whole life. The term 'feet', therefore is metaphorically applied to all the passions and cares by which we are brought into contact with the world; for, if the Holy Spirit occupied every part of us, we would no longer have anything to do with the pollutions of the world; but now, by that part in which we are carnal, we creep on the ground, or at least fix our feet in the clay, and, therefore, are to some extent unclean. Thus Christ always finds in us something to cleanse. What is here spoken of is not the forgiveness of sins, but the renewal, by which Christ, by gradual and uninterrupted succession, delivers His followers entirely from the sinful desires of the flesh.

What is most characteristic, however, of Calvin's thought on sanctification by the Spirit, is epitomised in his description of "the life of the Christian man" as "constant study and exercise in mortifying the flesh, until it is certainly slain, and the Spirit of God obtains dominion in us". (III.3.20.) This is what is enlarged upon in the third part of his definition of repentance (III.3.5.) which has already been adverted to. There he describes repentance (which has been seen to equal 'regeneration', which in turn gives way to 'sanctification') as consisting of two parts, namely, the mortification of the flesh, and the quickening of the Spirit. There is demanded (III.3.8.)

the entire destruction of the flesh, which is full of perverseness and malice. It is a most difficult and arduous achievement to renounce ourselves, and lay aside our natural disposition. For the flesh must not be thought to be destroyed unless every thing that we have of our own is abolished.

On the other hand "the Holy Spirit, instilling His holiness

into our souls, so inspires them with new thoughts and affections, that they may justly be regarded as new". (Idem.) "Both of these we obtain by union with Christ. For if we have true fellowship in His death, our old man is crucified by His power, and the body of sin becomes dead, so that the corruption of our original nature is never again in full vigour. If we are partakers in His resurrection, we are raised up by means of it to newness of life, which conforms us to the righteousness of God." (III.3.9.)

The truth held on to here by Calvin is that of Romans 6. The objective fact of Christ's death to sin has already been referred to in our description of God's side of our sanctification. The part which the Holy Spirit enables man himself to play is 'reckoning' on this objective fact. Calvin paraphrases Romans 6.11 -

Take this view of your case, - that as Christ once died for the purpose of destroying sin, so you have once died, that in future you may cease from sin; yea, you must daily proceed with that work of mortifying, which is begun in you, till sin be wholly destroyed: as Christ is raised to an incorruptible life, so you are regenerated by the grace of God, that you may lead a life of holiness and righteousness, inasmuch as the power of the Holy Spirit, by which you have been renewed, is eternal, and shall ever continue the same.

The Holy Spirit thus helps us first to 'know' the fact of Christ's death to sin; He then enables us to 'reckon' upon the fact that we were crucified with Him; then follows His enabling us to yield our members as instruments or weapons (arms) of righteousness - our yielding finding a counterpart in His wielding. "It is indeed well with us, if our flesh is continually mortified; nor is it a small attainment, when the

reigning power, being taken away from it, is wielded by the Holy Spirit."¹

Calvin indulges in no extravagances in his expectations of the issue of this 'mortification' and 'renewal' in this life; his is a very sober doctrine of 'perfection' and yet a very comprehensive, inspiring and challenging one.

This renewal, indeed, is not accomplished in a moment, a day, or a year, but by uninterrupted, sometimes even by slow, progress God abolishes the remains of carnal corruption in His elect, cleanses them from pollution, and consecrates them as His temples, restoring all their inclinations to real purity, so that during their whole lives they may practice repentance, and know that death is the only termination to this warfare.

In accordance with this 'long-term policy', Calvin says (III.4.5.)

I insist not that the life of the Christian shall breathe nothing but the perfect Gospel, though this is to be desired, and ought to be attempted. I insist not so strictly on evangelical perfection, as to refuse to acknowledge as a Christian any man who has not attained it. In this way all would be excluded from the Church, since there is no man who is not far removed from this perfection, while many, who have made but little progress, would be undeservedly rejected. What then? Let us set this before our eye as the end at which we ought constantly to aim... Let every one of us go as far as his humble ability enables him and prosecute the journey once begun. No one will travel so badly as not daily to make some degree of progress. This, therefore, let us never cease to do, that we may daily advance in the way of the Lord... If during the whole course of our life we seek and follow, we shall at length attain it, when relieved from the infirmity of flesh we are admitted to full fellowship with God.

¹ C. Rom. 6.7.

Calvin is a generous task-master in this context and he is aware of the many instances of the hiddenness of sanctification. He knows that the "hidden renovation is concealed from and escapes our observation, except it be apprehended by faith".¹ Not only does he recognise this hiddenness but he knows that often in His quiet, unostentatious way, the Spirit of God will dispel the qualms which arise when the standard confronting the believer seems to be unattainably high and his sinful weakness irremediably low.

Only by the grace of the Holy Spirit can the affections of the flesh be so mortified that they shall not prevail. Nor, truly, must we conclude, that as often as God commands anything we shall have strength to perform it, but rather we must hold fast the saying of Augustine - 'Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt'.²

Similarly he sees³ that

it is hatefully objected that the Spirit of God is blasphemed when as ability to fulfil the law is taken away from His grace and help; but we may readily answer because the question is not what the grace of the Spirit is able to do, but what that measure of grace is able to do which God divides to every one in this life. For we must always consider what God promises to do... We must limit the grace of the Spirit that it may agree with the promises.

As the Spirit of promise, the Holy Spirit has an eschatological function. He indicates and implements the future and ultimate fulfilment of the promises of God.

When we have received the Spirit of God, His promises are confirmed to us, and no dread is felt that they will be revoked. In themselves indeed the promises

¹ C. Rom. 7.22.

² C. Genesis 4.7.

³ C. Acts 15.10.

of God are not weak; but until we are supported by the testimony of the Spirit, we never rest upon them with unshaken confidence. The Spirit then is 'the earnest of our inheritance of eternal life, until the redemption', that is, until the day of complete redemption is arrived. So long as we are in this world, our warfare is sustained by hope, and therefore this earnest is necessary; but when the possession itself shall have been obtained, the necessity and use of the earnest will then cease... Though we are now redeemed by the blood of Christ, the fruit of that redemption does not yet appear... for we have not yet obtained it, but by hope.¹

Bearing this eschatological aspect in mind, Calvin refutes Osiander (III.11.10.) who adduces passages of Scripture

which, though used in reference to the heavenly life, he wrests to our present state. Peter says, that through the knowledge of Christ, 'are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by them ye might be partakers of the divine nature',² as if we now were what the gospel promises we shall be at the final advent of Christ; nay, John reminds us, that 'when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is'.³

¹ C. Eph. 1.14.

² 1 Pet. 1.4.

³ 1 Jn. 3.2.

(ii) The Practical Directions of the Spirit

Calvin has, however, a considerable amount to say about the practical help and directions given by the Spirit as He instructs man in Scripture and along the line of obedience to Scripture.

The chief service is that we listen to it, and that we stop as if reined in (like a horse), holding all our faculties captive under His Word, when He speaks to us... It will only then be powerful so long as we have learned to hear His voice and obey Him.¹

The Scripture contains a perfect rule of a good and happy life². When he (Paul) says this, he means that it is corrupted by sinful abuse, when this usefulness is not sought... It follows, that it is unlawful to treat it in an unprofitable manner; for the Lord, when He gave us the Scriptures, did not intend either to gratify our curiosity, or to encourage ostentation, or to give occasion for chatting and talking, but to do us good.

They are given us for 'instruction, reproof and correction' - instruction in righteousness meaning "the rule of a good and holy life".

Calvin is thus not interested in any exclusive, esoteric, eccentric or extravagant, "spiritual", ecstatic experiences as such. He is concerned to see them worked out on the moral, practical plane. 'Sanctification' for him has no meaning unless it results in the moral transformation of the life. The professed 'vertical' experience of the Holy Spirit, must be manifested by its 'horizontal' repercussions.

The Spirit of God, "teaching without affectation" in

¹ Sermon on Gal. 1.8 ff. Opera L.316.

² C. 2 Tim. 3.14.

Scripture, aims chiefly at two objects. (III.6.1,2.) He first teaches the love of righteousness, and He then prescribes the rules of righteousness.

He instils and implants into man's mind the love of righteousness, first by reminding him that God is Holy and that in his union with God holiness must be the bond; he should cleave to Him, in order that, pervaded with His holiness, he may follow whither He calls, since especially it concerns God's glory not to have fellowship with wickedness and impurity.

Secondly, man is reminded that God the Father who reconciles him to Himself in His Anointed, has impressed His image upon him, to which He would have him to be conformed. Instead of conforming himself to 'nature', man has Christ before him as a model, the image of which his life should express, and thus his failure to dedicate himself to righteousness would mean that he abjured the Saviour Himself.

Thirdly, the blessings of the Father should elicit a spontaneous and grateful response from man. Calvin's argument is that

ever since God exhibited Himself to us as a Father, we must be convicted of extreme ingratitude if we do not in turn exhibit ourselves as sons. Ever since Christ purified us by the laver of His blood, and communicated this purification by baptism, it would ill become us to be defiled with new pollution. Ever since He ingrafted us into His body, we, who are His members, should anxiously beware of contracting any stain or taint. Ever since He who is our Head ascended to Heaven, it is befitting in us to withdraw our affections from the earth, and with our whole soul aspire to heaven. Ever since the Holy Spirit dedicated us as temples to the Lord,

we should make it our endeavour to show forth the glory of God, and guard against being profaned by the defilement of sin. Ever since our soul and body were destined to heavenly incorruptibility and an unfading crown, we should earnestly strive to keep them pure and uncorrupted against the day of the Lord. (III.6.3.)

The sum and substance of this is that man has really no business to sin.

This comes out more clearly still in Calvin's account of the 'rules of righteousness' prescribed by the Spirit in Scripture - in particular, the comprehensive rule of Self-denial. It is in this context also that the Holy Spirit assumes the role of the Spirit of "Interruption". Barth¹ uses the term "interruption" (German Störung = disturbance, derangement, etc.) as the definition of the meaning of "sanctification", and refers the reader to the chapters in Calvin's Institutes which are now under consideration. (Viz. III.6-9.) The Spirit certainly does crash in upon, and invades, the citadel of self, paradoxically, through the offence of the cross, bringing out life through the negation of life.

We cannot be trained to the fear of God, and learn the first principles of piety, unless we are violently smitten with the sword of the Spirit and annihilated, as if God were declaring, that to be ranked among His sons there must be a destruction of our ordinary nature. (III.3.8.)

The first element in Self-denial is that man should realise (on the negative side) that he is not his own but

¹ Op. cit. p. 61 note.

that (on the positive side) he is God's. He must therefore withdraw the "dominion and government of himself from his own reason that he may give them to God". (III.7.1.) He must abandon himself and devote the whole energy of his mind to the service of God, which means that he "implicitly obeys the call of the Spirit of God", yielding "complete submission to the Holy Spirit".

The second principle follows naturally, namely that he is not to seek his own, but God's glory. A life lived as under, and as unto, God will preclude automatically all false pride and avarice and hypocrisy, and will require self-control, justice and godliness. Arrogant ambition must be curbed and humility, forthrightness, mutual respect and modesty developed. (III.7.2-4.)

The third principle (although of course it has featured in the second) is that man should seek his neighbour's good. In regard to this, three things should be noted. First, since God's liberal gifts are common, no man has the right to hold on to them as if they were only for himself; he is responsible for them as a steward and will have to give a reckoning for the use which he makes of them. He makes the right use of his possessions when, having dedicated them to God, he shares them with his neighbour.

Secondly, he must have respect to the image of God in man -

which exists in all, and to which we owe all honour and love. But in those who are of the household

of faith, the same rule is to be more carefully observed, inasmuch as that image is renewed and restored in them by the Spirit of Christ. (III.7.6.)

He must not ask whether his neighbour who may be an 'inferior' stranger, (to whom he is under no obligation and who may have actually harmed him) deserves his attention. Rather must he ask what the Lord has deserved, and act accordingly.

Thirdly, and most importantly, this must be done in a spirit of love; the action is worthless if love is absent. The Christian must put himself in the place of him whom he helps and must no more think of putting the latter under obligation to him than one member of the physical body does when it has helped another to recover from a disease. (III.7.7.)

The fourth main element in Self-denial Calvin describes as resignation to the will of God. The Christian knows that worldly prosperity, without God's blessing becomes a curse, and that worldly adversity with God's sanction and caress becomes a blessing.

Whatever happens, knowing that it is ordered by the Lord, he will receive it with a placid and grateful mind, and will not contumaciously resist the government of Him, at whose disposal he has placed himself and all that he has... The rule of piety is, that the hand of God is the ruler and arbiter of the fortunes of all, and, instead of rushing on with thoughtless violence, dispenses good and evil with perfect regularity. (III.7.10.)

An indispensable lesson learnt in the School of the Spirit is that of Bearing the Cross, (and of Taking up the Cross, since the Christian is called not only to bear 'crosses' in common with men but to take up the specifically Christian

Cross).

Those whom the Lord has chosen and honoured with His intercourse must prepare for a hard, laborious, troubled life, a life full of many and various kinds of evils; it being the will of our heavenly Father to exercise His people in this way while putting them to the proof. (III.8.1.)

In this, the Christian has the privilege of following Christ's example and of entering into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. This conduces to a humble dependence on the presence and power of God; it teaches patience and obedience; it serves to reprove and correct faults, as those of the erring children of the Father. He esteems it an honour to be persecuted for the sake of righteousness, and all these things he undergoes in no bloodless spirit of Stoicism, but as taught by the warm, truly humanising Spirit of God. His is no fatalistic acquiescence in an iron necessity which elicits from him a mere "so it must be". Rather he accepts humbly the Father's will. He no longer hears "the frigid cant, Yield, because it is necessary; but a living and energetic precept, Obey, because it is unlawful to resist; bear patiently, because impatience is rebellion against the justice of God". Moreover

Our heavenly Father consoles us, by the assurance, that in the very cross with which He afflicts us He provides for our salvation... Hence arises thanksgiving...and...it is clear how necessary it is to temper the bitterness of the cross with spiritual joy. (III.8.11.)

Truly, upon such does the Spirit of glory and of God rest.

No concept is nearer Calvin's heart than that of the

present life as being a Pilgrimage. Its insecurity and vanity should lead man to despise it; its struggles provide rigorous training and will give reality to the sharing of the eternal victory; its joys are a foretaste of the unending future blessings. The Christian, enlightened by the Spirit of God should even long for death and for admission into the eternal world. (III.9.5.)

The present life certainly has its uses, provided that extremes are avoided. On the one hand there is no need for undue austerity, since life in its manifold richness is the gift of God, whereby He provides us not only with necessities but also with delights. On the other hand, licence and extravagant luxury are not to be allowed since, among other things, they result in an incapacity, on the part of man, for spiritual life. Man should use this world as though he used it not. In particular he should use his own 'calling' - the station in which he finds himself in life as having been appointed by God.

The call of the Lord is the foundation and beginning of right action... Every one in his particular mode of life will, without repining, suffer its inconveniences, cares, uneasiness, and anxiety, persuaded that God has laid on the burden. This, too, will afford admirable consolation, that in following your proper calling, no work will be so mean and sordid as not to have a splendour and value in the eye of God. (III.10.6.)

(iii) Christian Liberty

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

"Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free."

"If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."¹ These and other texts Calvin echoes when he sounds forth the clarion call of the liberty of life in the Spirit. He exhorts every Christian to walk with head erect along the Highway of spiritual freedom.

He has three main things to say (which he refers to succinctly in III.19.9) in advising careful observation of the fact

that Christian liberty is in all its parts a spiritual matter, the whole force of which consists in giving peace to trembling consciences, whether they are anxious and disquieted as to the forgiveness of sins, or as to whether their imperfect works, polluted by the infirmities of the flesh, are pleasing to God, or are perplexed as to the use of things indifferent.

The first fact which should encourage and emancipate the Christian is that he has been released once and for all from the fearful bondage of the law. Since by the Spirit he has been given the assurance that he is justified by faith in Christ and has been acquitted and forgiven by God, he no longer needs to worry because he himself is unable to attain fully to the standard of the law. The law can still be his handrail but it has ceased to be his bar of judgment.

¹ 2 Cor. 3.17; Gal. 5.1,18; Rom. 8.2.

The second fact is that his release from the law allows his life to take the unfettered form of the voluntary obedience of a child to an infinitely understanding Father. He ceases to work as under a Great Taskmaster's eye, every detail of whose dictates must be meticulously observed. The Spirit of Adoption is his incentive, and he knows that, as in human matters,

sons who are treated in a more candid and liberal manner by their parents, hesitate not to offer them works that are only begun or half-finished, or even with something faulty in them, trusting that their obedience and readiness of mind will be accepted, although the performance be less exact than was wished, (so) our most indulgent Parent will approve our services, however small they may be, and however rude and imperfect. (III.19.5.)

Christian life is hereby given a new zest and verve and abandonment hitherto unknown, since the believer possesses the resiliency of a pardoned heart.

The third main fact of the liberty of the spiritual life is that the Christian is not bound before God to any observance of external things which are in themselves indifferent. (*ἀδιάφορα*), that is, neither good nor bad. They can be either used or not used. If a believer is not clear about this, his life can easily become a torment in which his conscience is continually haunted by superstitious scruples.

When a man begins to doubt whether it is lawful for him to use linen for sheets, shirts, napkins and handkerchiefs, he will not long be secure as to hemp, and will at last have doubts as to tow... In the end...he will deem it criminal to trample on a straw lying in his way. (III.19.7.)

Such a complex may well lead a man to the psycho-analyst's consulting room!

The healthy way is to acknowledge God's gifts thankfully and to use them accordingly. This of course will not permit liberty to pass into licence, nor will extravagance in anything be justified under the name of liberty. God's gifts are for life and not for luxury.

Moreover a Christian is fallacious in thinking that he must parade his liberty to maintain it. "Liberty gains nothing new by the sight of men, but is to be enjoyed before God, and consists as much in abstaining as in using." (III.19.10) Since no Christian lives to himself, he must pay due regard to the weaker brother whom he can easily offend by his conduct if he is not careful. Charity, edification and expediency are to be the guiding lights.

Liberty, however, must not be allowed to undermine true piety. In things which are not indifferent it is no use pretending to avoid offending the 'weaker brother' (for whom 'milk' is more appropriate than 'meat') by giving him poison instead of milk. Liberty of conscience does not imply a sentimentalism which fears giving offence - and that at the expense of truth.

The believer must first and foremost be free in his conscience towards God, and then towards men. He will live as it were in two spheres - the spiritual and the natural spheres - his belonging to the former not absolving him from duties in the latter.

By attending to this distinction (between the Spheres), we will not erroneously transfer the doctrine of the gospel concerning spiritual liberty to civil order, as if in regard to external government Christians were less subject to human laws, because their consciences are unbound before God, as if they were exempted from all carnal service, because in regard to the Spirit they are free. (III.19.15.)

The life of liberty in the Spirit will set man's conscience free from offence towards God, whose service is perfect freedom, and void of offence towards men whom he serves in love.

Prayer

The principal work of the Spirit is faith; the principal exercise of faith is prayer. Prayer is thus an absolutely integral part of, and, indeed, the integrating factor in, life in the Spirit. Prayer is the focal point of Christian experience. In it, and through it, there is a confluence of the essentials of the benefits of Christ and the Spirit which are described by Calvin. It is the very breath and animating principle of the Christian life, and it is of course impossible to sustain it outside the atmosphere of the Spirit. It is through prayer in the Spirit that the Christian attains the highest liberty - the liberty of the heights.

Calvin suggests two main reasons for the Christian's having recourse to prayer. The first is, that, as has been seen, man is completely impotent and incompetent on his own, at every point of his salvation and sanctification; he is, hemmed in and fettered at every stage. His liberty comes only through utter dependence on Another, in whose light alone he can see light. After man has learnt that whatever is necessary for him or defective in him is available in God and the Lord Jesus Christ, from Whom he can draw as from an inexhaustible fountain; it remains for him to seek and in prayer to implore of Him what he has learned to be in Him. (III.20.1.)

The other reason is that the true Christian realises his justified status in Christ, before God, and recognises the

witness of the Spirit of Adoption, sealing the testimony of the Gospel on his heart and enabling him to cry "Abba, Father". He can thus, in prayer, penetrate to those riches which are treasured up with the heavenly Father - "treasures which the Gospel of our Lord discovers to the eye of faith". (III.20.2.)

Calvin dismisses as ridiculous and as gross ignorance the suggestion that prayer is redundant inasmuch as God knows all our needs before our asking. Prayer is "not so much for His sake as for ours". God is certainly ascribed honour when man acknowledges his dependence upon Him, and there is on this score value in prayer. Moreover, man himself, is kept alert and on tip-toe, as it were, through prayer. Calvin therefore exhorts us to pray because of three benefits;

First, that our heart may always be inflamed with a serious and ardent desire of seeking, loving, and serving Him, while we accustom ourselves to have recourse to Him as a sacred anchor in every necessity; secondly, that no desire, no longing whatever, of which we are ashamed to make Him the witness, may enter our minds, while we learn to place all our wishes in His sight, and thus pour out our heart before Him; and lastly, that we may be prepared to receive all His benefits with true gratitude and thanksgiving, while our prayers remind us that they proceed from His hand.

(III.20.3.)

In the Spirit's school of prayer, according to Calvin, four rules are to be observed. First, there must be a reverent preparation of the mind: "to have our heart and mind framed as becomes those who are entering into converse with God." The mind must be "wholly intent on prayer,"..."borne and raised above itself," so that it does "not bring into the presence of God any of those things which our blind and stupid

reason is wont to devise, nor keep itself confined within the little measure of its own vanity, but rise to a purity worthy of God". (III.20.4.) This will mean that, on the one hand, wandering thoughts must be abhorred and guarded against, as being altogether insulting to the Majesty of God who gives audience. On the other hand, undue familiarity with God must be avoided, and great reserve must be observed in regard to the requests presented to Him. Unworthy and profane thoughts of every description are to be kept at bay and "we are to ask only in so far as God permits". (III.20.5.)

Quite obviously, man of himself is incapable of adhering to this rule; his mind meanders and his heart fluctuates.

To assist this weakness, God gives us the guidance of the Spirit in our prayers to dictate what is right, and regulate our affections. For seeing '~~we~~ know not what we should pray for as we ought', 'the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered'. (Rom. 8.26.) We are blind in our addresses to God; for though we feel our evils, yet our minds are more disturbed and confused than that they can rightly choose what is meet and expedient. If any one makes this objection - that a rule is prescribed to us in God's word; to this I answer, that our thoughts nevertheless continue oppressed with darkness, until the Spirit guides them by His light...for no one can of himself give birth to devout and godly aspirations. The unbelieving do indeed blab out their prayers, but they only trifle with God; for there is in them nothing sincere, or serious, or rightly formed. Hence the manner of praying aright must be suggested by the Spirit: and he calls those groanings unutterable, into which we break forth by the impulse of the Spirit, for this reason - because they far exceed the capability of our own minds. And the Spirit is said to intercede, not because He really humbles Himself to pray or to groan, but because He stirs up in our hearts those desires which we ought to entertain; and He also affects our hearts in such a way that these desires by their fervency penetrate into heaven itself. And Paul has thus spoken, that he might more significantly ascribe the whole to the grace of the Spirit. We

are indeed bidden to knock; but no one can of himself premeditate even one syllable, except God by the secret impulse of His Spirit knocks at our door, and thus opens for Himself our hearts. (C. Rom. 8.26.).

In the phrase 'But he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit.....'/the suitableness of the word to

"know";

for it intimates that God regards not these emotions of the Spirit as new and strange, or that He rejects them as unreasonable, but that He allows them, and at the same time kindly accepts them, as allowed and approved by Him. As God then aids us when He draws us as it were into His own bosom, so now He adds another consolation, that our prayers, of which He is the director, shall by no means be disappointed. (C. Rom. 8.27.)

It must not be concluded, however, that man has no part to play in prayer and that he can sink into sloth and wait in suspense until the Spirit takes possession of his mind while he himself is otherwise occupied. Rather must his dissatisfaction with his own heartlessness and sloth drive him to the Spirit. "When Paul", says Calvin (III.20.5) "enjoins us to pray in the Spirit" (1 Cor.14.15) he does not "cease to exhort us to vigilance, intimating, that while the inspiration of the Spirit is effectual to the formation of prayer, it by no means impedes or retards our own endeavours; since in this matter God is pleased to try how efficiently faith influences our hearts."

The second rule of prayer is that there must be a true realisation of his wants on the part of him who comes to pray. A realistic sense of need is essential and it is useless and abhorrent to come merely by superficial habit or custom. It is abominable to ask glibly for forgiveness when there is not the slightest vestige of conviction of sin in the heart; or to ask for gifts which he thinks come to him apart from God's

beneficence, or from some other quarter, or are already in his possession. Far less must he deceive himself that God is propitiated by his prayer.

There is no excuse for man's saying that he does not always feel like praying and that at such times he need not pray. On the one hand the Spirit is always available, and on the other, both physical and especially spiritual dangers are ever present to every man. Anyway the Christian's life should be one of continual repentance, and the penitent attitude is always in season in which he should "feel dissatisfied with what is wrong in his condition, and assume, which he cannot do without repentance, the character and feelings of a poor suppliant." (III.26.7.)

The third rule, following quite naturally, is that humility is essential in prayer. To break down proud self-confidence and to introduce a humble spirit which attributes all the glory to God, is the work of the Holy Spirit. "Supplication for pardon, with humble and ingenuous confession of guilt, from both the preparation and commencement of right prayer. For the holiest of men cannot hope to obtain any thing from God until he has been fully reconciled to Him." (III.20.9.)

"When believers long for deliverance from punishment they at the same time pray that their sins may be pardoned; for it were absurd to wish that the effect should be taken away while the cause remains."

... "Prayers will never reach God unless they are founded on free mercy." (ibid.) When these conditions are present, there is a sense in which a saint can take a confident step,

forward, and, knowing the work of the Spirit in his heart and life, producing "unfeigned integrity and innocence" and genuine longings after holiness, he can even appeal to his Spirit-wrought righteousness before God. (III.20.10.)

The fourth rule of prayer is that we must come in confidence of success: this, in spite of the sense of sin and unworthiness, since it is the mere goodness of God that raises us up. "Repentance and faith go hand in hand, being united by an indissoluble tie, the one causing terror, the other joy, so in prayer they must both be present". (III.20.11) "We may know" (Comm. 1. Cor. 2.12.) the nature of faith to be this, that conscience has from the Holy Spirit a sure testimony of the goodwill of God towards it, so that, resting upon this, it does not hesitate to invoke God as a Father.

Spirit-engendered faith, then, must be central in prayer: "prayer.....is not to come forth at random, but is to follow in the footsteps of faith" (III. 20.11). 'All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive'. (Matth. 21.22). Faith in its turn will follow confidently in the footsteps of the facts of the Gospel, since "God can only be invoked by such as have obtained a knowledge of His mercy from the Gospel, and feel firmly assured that that mercy is ready to be bestowed upon them." (III.20.12).

"The only prayer acceptable to God is that which springs from this presumption of faith, and is founded on the full assurance of hope". "Prayers are vainly poured out into the air unless accompanied with faith, in which, as from a watch-tower, we may quietly wait for God. With this agrees the order of Paul's exhortation. For before urging believers to pray

in the Spirit always, with vigilance and assiduity, he enjoins them to take "the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." (Eph. 6. 16-18).

Usually in the Gospel, precepts regarding prayer are followed by promises. - 'Ask, and it shall be given you.....' (Matth. 7.7). "For though all confess that we must obey the precept, yet the greater part would shun the invitation of God, did He not promise that he would listen and be ready to answer". (III.20.13). There is therefore no excuse for not coming boldly in response to God's bidding. "For neither is prayer (says Calvin in commenting on Acts 1.14) any sign of doubting but rather a testimony of our (sure hope and) confidence, because we ask those things at the Lord's hands which we know He hath promised. So it becometh us also to be instant in prayer, and to beg at God's hands that He will increase in us His Holy Spirit: increase, because before we can conceive any prayer we must needs have the first-fruits of the Spirit. For as much as He is the only Master who teacheth us to pray aright, who doth not only give us utterance, but also governs our inward affections."

Calvin does not comment much on the relation between the Spirit and the prayers of unbelievers and of those whose spirits and motives do not seem to accord with the Gospel, but to whom nevertheless God attends. Calvin claims, however, that there are exceptions which prove the rule and that God only means to show His concern for the "unworthily oppressed" and not to commend the Spirit-less and faithless prayers. "It is first, to magnify or display His mercy by the circumstance, that even the

wishes of unbelievers are not denied: and, secondly, to stimulate His true worshippers to more urgent prayer, when they see that sometimes even the wailings of the ungodly are not without avail Meanwhile though He hears them (unbelievers), it has no more to do with salvation than the supply of food which He gives to other despisers of His goodness." (III.20.15)

In face of these four rules the ordinary believer may well feel discouraged, since he knows that it is no mean task to fulfil them all. He need not despair, however, provided he is daily approximating more and more to the perfect law of prayer, remembering that "there is no prayer which God would not deservedly disdain, did He not overlook the blemishes with which all of them are polluted (III.20.16).

But above all it must be realised that "since no man is worthy to come forward in His own name, and appear in the presence of God, our heavenly Father, to relieve us at once from fear and shame, with which all must feel oppressed, has given us His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, to be our Advocate and Mediator, that under His guidance we may approach securely, confiding that with Him for our Intercessor nothing which we ask in His name will be denied to us, as there is nothing which the Father can deny to Him." (III. 20.17).

Calvin thus again, in the context of prayer, as in so many other contexts, shows that the Spirit does not work apart from or contrary to Christ. The Interceding Spirit and the Interceding Son, both alike have their cardinal place in prayer. It is through the Interceding Spirit alone that we

can know that the Interceding Son bears us and our requests to God and presents His Sacrifice as the ground of our admission into God's presence. In the light of this, Calvin can in no way countenance prayers through the dead saints, much less prayer for the dead. There are enough healthy avenues through which prayer can be made and the Christian can and must continually be occupied with petition and thanksgiving. "The sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving can never be interrupted without guilt, since God never ceases to load us with favour upon favour, so as to force us to gratitude, however slow and sluggish we may be". (III. 20.28).

Prayer can be exercised in private or publicly. Common prayer is commanded and commended provided that hypocrisy and ostentation are avoided. Calvin is not averse to singing in prayer in so far as it is in the Spirit. There must certainly be no misuse of the 'gifts' of the Spirit in prayer. There is no excuse for speaking in an unintelligible tongue. "The principle we must always hold is, that in all prayer, public and private, the tongue without the mind must be displeasing to God". Calvin also does not despise the use of the body since "the bodily gestures usually observed in prayers, such as kneeling and uncovering of the head, are exercises by which we attempt to rise to higher veneration of God. (III. 20.33).

Calvin comments richly upon the 'Lord's Prayer', intimating our inestimable privilege in having it at our disposal. He reminds us that even the ancient Greek poet's prayer (quoted by Plato. Alcibid. i) 'O King Jupiter, give what is best, whether we wish it or wish it not; but avert

from us what is evil though we ask it', shows "how dangerous it is to ask of God what our own passion dictates; while at the same time, he reminds us of our unhappy condition in not being able to open our lips before God without danger unless His Spirit instruct us how to pray aright." (III.20.34) How infinitely higher then is the Lord's Prayer. Its six petitions, three 'looking to the glory of God alone', and three 'devoted to our own interest' are sublime patterns for prayer in the Spirit.

The very first words implicitly give prominence to the Spirit since He alone produces in us a filial confidence in the Father's bounty.

As our narrow hearts are incapable of comprehending such boundless favour, Christ is not only the earnest and pledge of our adoption, but also gives us the Spirit as a witness of this adoption, that through Him we may freely cry aloud, Abba, Father. Whenever, therefore, we are restrained by any feeling of hesitation, let us remember to ask of Him that He may correct our timidity, and placing us under the magnanimous guidance of the Spirit, enable us to pray boldly." (III. 20.37).

The prayer for the coming of the Kingdom has no meaning apart from the work of the Spirit on the individual. The "Kingdom consists of two parts; the first is, when God by the agency of His Spirit corrects all the depraved lusts of the flesh, which in bands war against Him; and the second, when He brings all our thoughts into obedience to His authority.... This is done when by the secret inspiration of His Spirit He displays the efficacy of His Word, and raises it to the place of honour which it deserves. The believer thereby is enabled to withdraw from the corruptions of the world, to mortify the flesh, endure the cross and have his inner man renewed, knowing

that God "Protects His people, guides them aright by the agency of His Spirit and confirms them in perseverance." (III.2042)

In the last petition, namely for strength against temptation and deliverance from evil

we are reminded that we not only have need of the gift of the Spirit inwardly to soften our hearts, and turn and direct them to the obedience of God, but also of His assistance, to render us invincible by all the wiles and violent assaults of Satan..... For if the Spirit of God is our strength in waging the contest with Satan, we cannot gain the victory unless we are filled with Him, and thereby freed from all infirmity of the flesh". (III.20. 46).

The Lord's Prayer then, Calvin shows to be complete and incapable of being surpassed, and men must not go beyond it: not that this means that its words must be rigidly adhered to.

For in Scripture we meet with many prayers differing greatly from it in word, yet written by the same Spirit, and capable of being used by us with the greatest advantage. Many prayers also are continually suggested to believers by the same Spirit, though in expression they bear no great resemblance to it....No man, however, should wish, expect, or ask anything which is not summarily comprehended in this prayer..... It omits nothing which we can conceive in praise of God, nothing which we can imagine advantageous to man, and the whole is so exact that all hope of improving it may well be renounced..... God has taught what He willed; He willed what was necessary." (III. 20.49)

In such an obedient spirit of prayer man will not confine God to certain circumstances, or prescribe to Him the time, place or mode of action, but in faith will persevere, knowing that whatever the appearances and the delays in answering, God is in sovereign charge.

The Spirit and the Sovereignty of God.Predestination and Providence; preservation and perseverance.

Calvin has barricaded every loop-hole through which the most meagre glory to man could slip in. As he has builded up the story of man in his relation to God, he has made it abundantly clear that, at every point leading up to confrontation with Christ, and then at every subsequent point of communion with Christ, man is utterly dependent on the Holy Spirit. Even the faintest leanings towards the Gospel, the dimmest glimmerings of a realisation of his need, and then the development of these factors until the actual embracing of the mercy of God in gratuitous pardon occurs, are all attributed to the Spirit. To Him alone also are to be traced the gifts and resources of the Gospel throughout the whole life of the believer and His initiative alone provides a basis for any response on man's part. Calvin is faced, however, with the stubborn and undeniable fact that a vast number of men do not embrace the Gospel, and since he will not shift a fraction from the impregnable rock of the Sovereignty of God, he is forced to conclude that the Spirit's not illuminating all in the faith of the Gospel is due solely to the Sovereign Will of God. The simple fact must be that God has not willed to elect all men to salvation. From this, Calvin maintains, (and he claims that Scripture and experience corroborate him) a twofold truth emerges, namely that the Sovereign God has predestinated some to eternal life and others to perdition.

We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by His eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was His pleasure

one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was His pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel, as regards the elect, is founded on His free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom He dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible judgment. In regard to the elect, we regard calling as the evidence of election, and justification as another symbol of its manifestation, until it is fully accomplished by the attainment of glory. But as the Lord seals His elect by calling and justification, so by excluding the reprobate either from the knowledge of His name or the sanctification of His Spirit, He by these marks in a manner discloses the judgment which awaits them. (III.21.7).

It is certainly not within the scope of this present work to discuss the whole problem of predestination in its multiple ramifications, nor to decide whether in Calvin's theology the doctrine is

central and determinative of the character of the whole, or organic to it while not absolutely essential.

Authorities differ on this question.

Doumergue decides that it is not the foundation stone of Calvin's theology but the keystone which sustains the edifice. Victor Monod is of opinion that it is for Calvin a point of arrival not of departure, a necessary hypothesis not a principle of explanation. Seeberg holds that it occupied a secondary place in his teaching, and Scheibe also refuses to regard it as central, though gradually approaching that position. The truth seems to be that Calvin would have found it difficult to answer for himself, or that his answers would have varied.¹

What is of importance to notice, however, is that, in Calvin's magnum opus - his 'Institutes' - his systematic or dogmatic treatment of the doctrine of predestination comes at the end of his extensive and comprehensive examination of the experiential

1. Hunter: "The Teaching of Calvin," p. 89.

aspects of the Christian faith, in what might be termed the Soteriological section of his system, or more especially, under the larger canopy of the Holy Spirit.¹ He does not therefore deal with it in a cold, calculating manner, in 'transcendental remoteness' from living truth, in a bare analysis of the pre-mundane decrees of God. His conception of predestination is essentially religious and theological rather than metaphysical and philosophical, and the distinction should be drawn and jealously guarded, between his doctrine on the one hand and an impersonal Determinism or Fatalism on the other.

The relation and difference between Calvin's "Predestination" and Fatalism is well described by Hodge.² when he says that "Both assume absolute certainty in the sequence of all events. But they differ in the ground of this certainty, the nature of the influence by which it is secured, the ends contemplated, and the effects on the reason and the conscience of men." Bavink³ claims that "Determinism is in principle rationalistic; it cherishes the delusion of being able to explain everything from the reign of natural law, holding that all existing things are rational since reason perceives that they could not be otherwise than they actually are. Predestination on the other hand is a thoroughly religious conception. While able to recognise natural law and to reckon with the forces of nature, it refuses to rest in this or to consider natural necessity the first and last word of history

1. i.e. Institutes. Book III. 2. Systematic Theology Vol.1.p.548.
 3. H. Bavink - Calvin and Common grace, p.110 ff. Calvin and the Reformation - Four Studies.

In proportion as the Christian religion is distinctly experienced and appreciated in its essence as true, full religion, as pure grace, it will also be felt to include, and that directly, without the need of dialectic deduction, the confession of predestination..... It sprang spontaneously from the religious experience of the Reformers. If Calvin introduced any modification, it consists in this, that he freed the doctrine from the semblance of harshness and arbitrariness and imparted to it a more purely ethico-religious character."¹

Calvin's approach then, to the question of predestination, when considered in the light of its integral connection with the Holy Spirit can be seen to be a more dynamic, a richer and a warmer one than is often acknowledged. His primary intention is not to introduce it controversially but rather as a profound buttress and encouragement to the believer. The Protestant Christians at his time, of course, had been summarily deprived of the external authority of the Church on which they could rely as the ultimate guarantor of their salvation. Calvin came to their aid and directed their attention to the eternal decrees of the Sovereign God who had elected them. This eternal election could be made known to them in time only by the Holy Spirit, and the simple yet significant fact that the Holy Spirit had given them faith and the consequent benefits of the Christian resources, is proof positive that they are elect.

¹ In the above quotations there is a tendency to confuse predestination with the wider concept of Providence; see infra.

Calvin writes in one of his letters¹

The doctrine of the gratuitous mercy of God is entirely destroyed, unless we hold that the faithful, whom God has thought fit to choose out for salvation, are distinguished from the reprobate by the mere good pleasure of God; unless this also be clearly established as a consequence, that faith flows from the secret election of God, because He enlightens by His Spirit those whom it seemed good to Him to elect before they were born, and by the grace of adoption grafts them into his family.

Again,

Though the Lord, by electing his people, adopted them as His sons, we, however, see that they do not come into possession of this great good until they are called; but when called, the enjoyment of this election is in some measure communicated to them. For which reason the Spirit which they receive is termed by Paul both the 'Spirit of Adoption', and the 'seal' and 'earnest' of the future inheritance; because by His testimony He confirms and seals the certainty of future adoption on their hearts. (III. 24. 1.)

Commenting on John 6.40 - 'and this is the will of Him that sent me.....' Calvin warns believers against indulging in too much curiosity with regard to the hidden will of God.

They are madmen, therefore, who seek their own salvation or that of others in the whirlpool of predestination, not keeping the way of salvation which is exhibited to them. Nay more, by this foolish speculation, they endeavour to overturn the force and effect of predestination; for if God has elected us to this end, that we may believe, take away faith, and election will be imperfect.... Besides, as the election of God, by an indissoluble bond, draws His calling along with it, so when God has effectually called us to faith in Christ, let this have as much weight with us as if He had engraven His seal to ratify His decree concerning our salvation. For the testimony of the Holy Spirit

1. Vol. III. Letter 359.

is nothing else than the sealing of our adoption. To every man, therefore, his faith is a sufficient attestation of the eternal predestination of God, so that it would be a shocking sacrilege to carry the inquiry farther; for that man offers an aggravated insult to the Holy Spirit, who refuses to assent to His simple testimony.

Calvin underlines the fact, however, that election precedes faith and stands in a relation to it as cause to effect; the importance of faith and the testimony of the Spirit must never make us reverse the order.

Some make man a fellow-worker with God in such a sense, that man's suffrage ratifies election, so that, according to them, the will of man is superior to the counsel of God. As if Scripture taught that only the power of being able to believe is given us, and not rather faith itself. Others, although they do not so much impair the grace of the Holy Spirit, yet, induced by what means I know not, make election dependent on faith, as if it were doubtful and ineffectual till confirmed by faith..... It is true that we must there look for its certainty, because, if we attempt to penetrate to the secret ordination of God, we shall be engulfed in that profound abyss. But when the Lord hath manifested it to us, we must ascend higher in order that the effect may not bury the cause. (III. 24. 3.)

One of the chief benefits then, of election and faith, when regarded in the right order and in the light of the Spirit, is the assurance of salvation. Calvin puts a great price on the certainty of salvation which is linked up with the fact of election. On this point, one of the characteristic differences between Calvin's use of election and that of Luther becomes clear. Luther staked his all on the loving, forgiving character of God, who would never turn away nor allow to perish, anyone who trustfully committed himself to Him. If one found oneself able to trust in God through Christ then one could know that one was saved. Calvin on the other hand put the stress on the certainty of election as evidenced to him by the conscious possession of saving faith.

This 'Saving faith', however, as the evidence of election which Calvin mentions, is conjoined by him to complementary tokens. Paul in writing to the Thessalonians (C. 2 Thess. 2.13) about their having been chosen by God from the beginning to salvation through (or in) sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,

meant simply to introduce, in connection with election, those nearer tokens which manifest to us what is in its own nature incomprehensible, and are conjoined with it by an indissoluble tie. Hence in order that we may know that we are elected by God, there is no occasion to inquire as to what He decreed before the creation of the world, but we find in ourselves a satisfactory proof if He has sanctified us by His Spirit, - if He has enlightened us in the faith of His gospel. For the gospel is an evidence to us of our adoption, and the Spirit seals it, and those that are led by the Spirit are the sons of God, (Rom. 8.14) and he who by faith possesses Christ has everlasting life..... Hence it becomes us to rest satisfied with the faith of the gospel, and that grace of the Spirit by which we have been regenerated.

Calvin thus exhorts us not to probe over-curiously into the inscrutable will of God, but rather to stand amazed at His grace. Every believer should exult in adoring wonder at the fact of the Holy Spirit's initiative in grace. He knows that his innate inner corruption prevents his coming of himself to salvation. His own will is so bound that his only 'freedom' is to choose evil - his bondage denying him the privilege of choosing salvation and the good. His situation and condition are such that not even the outward presentation of the Gospel to him can effect anything. It is a patent fact that the gospel has been proclaimed to many but it has availed them nothing. There must then, be that inward calling of grace by the Holy Spirit. - a calling which is obviously restricted to the elect.

The outward preaching of the gospel has the power of the Spirit connected with it; God not only addresses the elect by the outward word, but also inwardly draws them to Him.

Calling consists not merely of the preaching of the word, but also of the illumination of the Spirit..... God also to display His own glory, withholds from them (i.e. the reprobate) the effectual agency of His Spirit. Therefore, this inward calling is an infallible pledge of salvation. (III. 24.2)

Calvin sees in Scripture two species of calling:

for there is an universal call, by which God, through the external preaching of the word invites all men alike, even those for whom He designs the call to be a savour of death, and the ground of a severer condemnation. Besides this there is a special call which, for the most part, God bestows on believers only, when by the internal illumination of the Spirit He causes the word preached to take deep root in their hearts. Sometimes, however, He communicates it also to those whom He enlightens only for a time, and whom afterwards, in just punishment for their ingratitude, He abandons and smites with greater blindness..... The former (universal) call is common to the wicked, the latter brings with it the spirit of regeneration, which is the earnest and seal of the future inheritance by which our hearts are sealed unto the day of the Lord. (III. 24.8).... even the pious, and those that fear God, need this special inspiration of the Spirit. Lydia, a seller of purple, feared God, and yet it was necessary that her heart should be opened, that she might attend to the doctrine of Paul, and profit in it, (Acts 16.14). This was not said of one woman only, but to teach us that all progress in piety is the secret work of the Spirit. (III.24.13.).

The grace of God is insipid to men, until the Holy Spirit gives it its savour. (III.24.14). God at the very time when He is verbally exhorting all to repentance, influences the elect by the secret movement of His Spirit. (III. 24.16.)

Thus from many angles Calvin drives home the truth that it is imperative for the Holy Spirit to take the initiative in bringing the elect into the Kingdom, thereby making his election known to him and effective. Cunningham's verdict is true when he says¹

1. Cunningham Theology of the Reformation, p.209.

The ineradicable sense which every converted man has that if God had not chosen him, he would not have chosen God, and that if God by His Holy Spirit had not exerted a decisive and determining influence in the matter, he would never have been turned from darkness to light and been led to embrace Christ as his Saviour, that is really the sum and substance of Calvinism.

Wheeler Robinson is not so enthusiastic about Calvin and would not describe things in the same way as the Reformer, and yet in his discussion of faith¹ there are common elements between his approach and that of Calvin.

No man can compel himself to trust God, though he may seek and find ways in which God will be revealed as One to be trusted. Those ways may be as unlikely to human eyes as the road to Damascus; yet there is an inner way of the Spirit prescribed by God which surely leads to Him. Faith is the Spirit's work as much as any other part of Christian experience. It is the inevitable human response to God when He is seen and known in His true nature as a living presence. We may call it a divine compulsion of man, if we remember that we are moving in a spiritual realm, where compulsion is conviction, and conviction is wrought only by the discovery of that which is. The prophets of Israel felt this spiritual compulsion in the realm of their special work, and they did not feel themselves to be free agents when they uttered their 'Thus saith the Lord'. We have not entered into the full inheritance of faith until we learn to say, 'I can no other'. But this compelled response to the revelation of the Gospel is a service which man feels to be perfect freedom.

It is of interest to compare this quotation with Calvin's comment on John. 6.44.

'No man can come to me, unless the Father, who hath sent me, draw him'..... No man will ever of himself be able to come to Christ, but God must first approach him by His Spirit; and hence it follows that all are not drawn, but that God bestows this grace on those whom He has elected. True, indeed, as to the

1. op. cit. pp. 208, 209.

kind of drawing, it is not violent, so as to compel men by external force; but still it is a powerful impulse of the Holy Spirit, which makes men willing who formerly were unwilling and reluctant. It is a false and profane assertion, therefore, that none are drawn but those who are willing to be drawn, as if man made himself obedient to God by his own efforts; for the willingness with which men follow God is what they already have from Himself, who has formed their hearts to obey Him.

A prominent fact which must not be overlooked is that in describing the mode in which the Spirit works in making election real, Calvin emphasises (as in so many other contents) the connection between the Spirit and Christ, and the truth (the word of the gospel), and faith. This enables him to obviate two objections. First, if men are predestinated, then there is no need to preach the gospel. Calvin answers this objection by showing that men are elected in Christ as known through the gospel. It is only in virtue of the substitutionary atonement of Christ that the election of men has any substance. Thus the truth of the gospel must be presented to the elect that they may be brought to a realisation of their election.

If we seek for the paternal mercy and favour of God, we must turn our eyes to Christ, in whom alone the Father is well pleased..... Hence, those whom God has adopted as sons, He is said to have elected, not in themselves, but in Christ Jesus, (Eph.1.4) because He could love them only in Him, and only as being previously made partakers with Him, honour them with the inheritance of His Kingdom. But if we are elected in Him, we cannot find the certainty of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father; if we look at Him apart from the Son. Christ, then, is the mirror in which we ought, and in which, without deception, we may contemplate our election. For since it is into His body that the Father has decreed to ingraft those whom from eternity He wished to be His, that He may regard as sons all whom He acknowledges to be His members, if we are in communion with Christ, we have proof sufficiently clear and strong that we are written in the Book of Life. Moreover, He admitted us to sure communion with Himself, when, by the preaching of the gospel, He declared that He was given us by the

Father, to be ours with all His blessings. (III.24.5)

Christ, then, must be preached so that the Holy Spirit may produce faith in the elect and thus actualise their election. On the other hand, the preaching of the Gospel has an effect on the reprobate. "The preaching of the gospel shows up hardness of heart and stubbornness against God, and renders the reprobate more¹ inexcusable."

The second objection is that the doctrine of election opens the door to a lax life on the part of the elect. Calvin easily disposes of this objection by showing the simple fact that the elect can never know their election apart from the faith produced in them by the Holy Spirit, and that this faith, if it is at all real, must issue in repentance, consisting of regeneration and sanctification of life.

It becomes us to rest satisfied with the faith of the Gospel, and that grace of the Spirit by which we have been regenerated. And by this means is refuted the wickedness of those who make the election of God a pretext for every kind of iniquity, while Paul connects it with faith and regeneration in such a manner, that he would not have it judged of by us on any other grounds. (Comm. 2. Thess. 2.13.).

The elect are called to eternal life, which is a new quality of life - the life of the kingdom of God; they are therefore called unto holiness - to be conformed to the image of Christ. Inseparably connected with election is the guarantee of perseverance, again through the preservation of the Holy Spirit. By their advance and continuance in the faith the difference between them and the reprobate will become clear. Commenting on our Lord's words "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen" (John. 13.18) Calvin says that

¹ 1. Comment on Job 36. 18-19.

the reprobate are sometimes endued by God with the gifts of the Spirit to execute the office with which He invests them... But this is widely different from the sanctification of the Holy Spirit which the Lord bestows on none but His own children; for He renews them in understanding and heart, that they may be holy and unblameable in His sight. Besides that sanctification has a deep root in them, which cannot be removed, because the adoption of God is without repentance.

Again, in his comment on 2 Cor. 5. 5. he says that there are

two offices of the Holy Spirit - first, to show to believers what they ought to desire, and secondly, to influence their hearts efficaciously, and remove all their doubt, that they may steadfastly persevere in choosing what is good

Christ's promise that 'all that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out' guarantees, says Calvin (Comm. Jn. 6.37) that

God works in His elect by such an efficacy of the Holy Spirit that not one of them falls away; for the word 'give' has the same meaning as if Christ had said, 'Those whom the Father hath chosen He regenerates and gives to me, that they may obey the gospel.'

The danger has already been hinted at that Predestination can be confused with Providence. Calvin in his first edition of the 'Institutes' treats them together but in later editions distinguishes clearly between them. Predestination refers to the ultimate ends and destinies of men, in election unto life and salvation or unto death and perdition. Providence has to do with the infinitesimal and intricate details of all that happens during the span stretching from the pre-mundane decrees right on to the attainment of the predetermined destinies. "The activity of His Providence ensures the fulfilment of His Predestination."

The Sovereign God, the Creator and Preserver of all things is in charge of and cares for, every detail of life. Calvin admits (I. 16. 1.) "that in general, indeed, philosophers teach, and the human mind conceives, that all the parts of the world are invigorated by the secret inspiration of God. They do not, however, reach the height to which David rises, taking all the pious along with him, when he says, 'These wait all upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season.... Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created, and Thou renewest the face of the earth'.¹

The eternal decrees of God are carried out in their multiple details by the Holy Spirit. "Men do nothing save at the secret instigation of God. They do not discuss and deliberate upon anything but what He has previously decreed with Himself and brings to pass by His secret direction" (I.18.1.) "Single acts are so regulated by God, and all events so proceed from His determinate counsel that nothing happens fortuitously (I.16.4).

The Spirit's work, however, does not preclude all secondary causes or common-sense provisions and precautions on man's part. Man must "inquire and learn from Scripture what is pleasing to God, and then, under the guidance of the Spirit, endeavour to attain it." (I. 17.3.)

"The sum of the whole", says Calvin (I.18.2.) "is this - since the will of God is said to be the cause of all things, all the counsels and actions of men must be held to be governed by His providence; so that He not only exerts His power in the

1. Ps. civ. 27.-30.

elect, who are guided by the Holy Spirit, but also forces the reprobate to do Him service." Calvin by his totalitarian claims for God's Providence is faced with the formidable problem of attributing the responsibility and guilt of sin to man rather than to God, and he has been accused of failing to make clear that God is not the author of sin. His contention, however, is that God uses the sinful actions of men in order to attain His holy and righteous purposes. Men's intentions and motives may be wrong and culpable, God's are never unholy, and so, although He is, in a sense, responsible for man's sin, He must not be charged with its guilt. Calvin is aware of the difficulties of his doctrine at this point and confesses the impotence of human reason to plumb the depths of the will of God. His exhortation is "Let us call to mind our imbecility and remember that the light in which He dwells is not without cause termed inaccessible, because shrouded in darkness."

Whatever the difficulties, however, which beset his theology at this juncture, it is certain that Calvin and his followers could emphasise the religious significance of the fact that the Sovereign Spirit of God was available at every point and that to those who humbly acquiesced in the Divine Will, in obedient response, all things worked together for good.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE FELLOWSHIP

1. THE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER VI

The Holy Spirit and the Fellowship

1. The Spirit and the Church

Calvin is an avowed enemy of spiritual isolationism and a champion of the social aspect of the Christian life. He has demonstrated beyond all equivocation the fact that man is saved as an individual, in the sense that the Holy Spirit is intimately interested in bringing him as a single person to the knowledge of salvation in Christ. The statement of Schleiermacher is true that "whereas Romanism makes the relation of the individual to Christ dependent on his relation to the Church, Protestantism makes the relation of the individual to the Church dependent on his relation to Christ". Calvin, however, would not allow anyone to think of the Church as secondary, redundant or negligible; the Church is absolutely necessary as the one "into whose bosom God is pleased to collect His children, not only that by her aid and ministry they may be nourished as long as they are babes and children, but may also be guided by her maternal care until they grow up to manhood, and, finally, attain to the perfection of faith". (IV.1.1.)

The Church moreover has more than a 'utilitarian' value; it has an essential value. "All the elect of God are so joined together in Christ, that as they depend on one head, so they are as it were compacted into one body, being knit together like its different members; made truly one by living together under the same Spirit of God in one faith, hope, and

charity, called not only to the same inheritance of eternal life, but to participation in one God and Christ." (IV.1.2.) In his reply to Sadoleto,¹ Calvin describes the Church as "the society of all the saints, a society which, spread over the whole world, and existing in all ages, yet bound together by the one doctrine and the one Spirit of Christ, cultivates and observes unity of faith and brotherly concord".

Calvin must not be understood as meaning by the Church an "amorphous, vaguely defined body, a haphazard collection of individuals accidentally, temporarily, and loosely associated by reason of common beliefs or sympathies".² His is never an atomistic, piecemeal conception but rather a dynamic, 'catholic' one. The Church is the unique creation of the Holy Spirit into which He calls the elect and through which they are united to Christ.

It is evident that Calvin, in conformity with the other Reformers, is thinking of the Church in two senses. He has in mind the invisible church which includes the elect of the past, present and future, and he is also thinking of the visible Church on earth, which, in part, is included in the invisible Church. He would hold, as strongly as any Romanist, to the four marks of the Church - unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity, although his interpretation of these terms would differ from that of his adversaries.

He would admit³ that four main elements must be recognised,

¹ Tracts, Vol. 1, p. 37.

² Mitchell Hunter, Teaching of Calvin, p. 148.

³ C.f. Litton, The Church of Christ (1851), pp. 56 ff.

namely the social character of the Christian life, the visibility of the Church, the ministerial work and the element of invisibility. The difference between him and the Roman Catholics would emerge especially in regard to the last element since their emphasis is on the external as the essence of the church while he lays stress on the internal. "The Romanist, while admitting that there is or ought to be in the Church an interior life not cognisable by human eye, yet regards this as a separable accident and makes the essence of the Church to consist in what is external and visible; the Protestant, on the contrary, while admitting that to be visible is an inseparable property of the Church, makes the essence thereof to consist in what is spiritual and unseen: namely the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians. The one defines the Church by its outward, the other by its inward characteristics."¹

The Church for Calvin is not merely an external organisation but a society - an 'organism' of living beings - of men made spiritually alive by the Holy Spirit. These, being in vital communion with their Living Head, will also be in living communion with one another. This communion certainly involves the element of invisibility; "God wondrously preserves His Church, while placing it as it were in concealment." (IV.1.2.)

Calvin accords with Augustine in recognising that the visible Church contains good and bad, the elect and the non-elect, the spiritual and the unspiritual. Like the tares and the wheat they are to be allowed to remain together until God

¹ Ibid., p. 70.

will ultimately separate them. He is adamant on the necessity of remaining inside the Church despite the fact that many blemishes are apparent, knowing realistically that a spotless Church is impossible on earth. He is prepared to write, as it were, in large print the dictum - Extra ecclesiam, nulla salus, 'Outside the Church, no salvation.' It is only within her fold that the divine parental privileges and benefits are available. To those to whom God is a Father, the Church must also be a mother. "Let us learn," he says, "from her single title of Mother, how useful, nay, how necessary the knowledge of her is, since there is no other means of entering into life unless she conceive us in the womb and give us birth, unless she nourish us at her breasts, and, in short, keep us under her charge and government, until, divested of mortal flesh, we become like the angels." (IV.1.4.)

The secret election of God forms the foundation of the Church and those who are within it can rest assured that this election cannot fail or change, any more than God's eternal providence. It is also connected to "the stability of Christ, who will no more allow His faithful followers to be dissevered from Him, than He would allow His own members to be torn to pieces... So long as we continue in the bosom of the Church, we are sure that the truth will remain with us". (IV.1.3.) "Beyond the pale of the Church no forgiveness of sins, no salvation, can be hoped for..." "That benefit is so peculiar to the Church that we cannot enjoy it unless we continue in communion with the Church." (IV.1.22.) "The Lord has not promised His mercy save in the communion of saints." (IV.1.20.)

All those therefore "who, by the mercy of God the Father, through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, have become partakers with Christ," should realise that they "are set apart as the proper and peculiar possession of God;..."(IV.1.3.) "that the paternal favour of God and the special evidence of spiritual life are confined to His peculiar people, and hence the abandonment of the Church is always fatal". (IV.1.4.)

Calvin is quite definite as to the marks which characterise the true Church, and where these are respected, he vehemently forbids secession. The two marks are, first, the preaching of the Word and, secondly, the proper administration of the Sacraments. By his own practice, he virtually adds a third mark, namely the right undertaking of discipline and separation. He is indefatigable in his insistence on the sincere preaching and hearing of the unadulterated, apostolic gospel. He is not fastidious about the non-essentials of doctrine provided that the basic tenets are uncompromisingly proclaimed. There are, he admits, primary and secondary doctrines. "Some are so necessary to be known, that all must hold them to be fixed and undoubted as the proper essentials of religion: for instance, that God is one, that Christ is God and the Son of God, that our salvation depends on the mercy of God and the like. Others, again, which are the subject of controversy among the Churches, do not destroy the unity of the faith; for why should it be regarded as a ground of dissension between Churches, if one, without any spirit of contention or perverseness in dogmatism, holds that the soul, on quitting the body, flies to heaven, and another, not daring to speak positively as to the abode, holds it for certain that it lives with the

Lord?... What I say is, that we are not on account of every minute difference to abandon a Church, provided it retains sound and unimpaired that doctrine in which the safety of piety consists and keeps the use of the sacraments instituted by the Lord." (IV.1.12.)

When the Word of God is revered and presented, Calvin is assured that the Holy Spirit is operating and spiritual fruit results. Similarly, where the Scripture is taken as the basic norm for the dispensing of the sacraments, God is honoured and the Spirit's saving efficacy is present and active.

The discipline which he exercises in the name of the Spirit of God is very rigorous, and yet he warns against any pharisaical, self-righteous evacuation on the part of those who allow censure to run amok, unbridled by charity.

As God has been pleased that the communion of His Church shall be maintained in this external society, any one who, from hatred of the ungodly, violates the bond of this society, enters on a downward course, in which he incurs great danger of cutting himself off from the communion of the saints. Let them reflect, that in a numerous body there are several truly righteous and innocent in the eye of the Lord who may escape their notice. Let them reflect that, of those who seem diseased, there are many who are far from taking pleasure or flattering themselves in their faults, and who, ever and anon aroused by a serious fear of the Lord, aspire to greater integrity. Let them reflect that they have no right to pass judgment on a man for one act, since the holiest sometimes make the most grievous fall. Let them reflect that it is more important that a Church should be gathered both for the ministry of the Word and the participation of the sacraments, than that all its power should be dissipated by the fault of some ungodly man. (IV.1.16.)

Such an attitude as these words reflect are indeed worthy of

the servant of the generous Spirit of God.

The same generosity leads Calvin to be in the forefront of what might be described as the 'Ecumenical movement' of his times. He does not depart from the three marks of the Church which he had enumerated but, bearing these in mind, he is zealous for the promotion of unity between the Churches. He has a vision of a world-wide Church acting harmoniously and is dauntless in his attempts to attain it. The opportunities which presented themselves for him himself to do foreign missionary work were few. It can not be said that he would be afraid to venture abroad in face of the countless hazards, but it is well known that the difficulties facing any enterprising missionary programme at his time were extremely formidable. The almost overwhelming duties and responsibilities, however, which he had to encounter at home, and the physical dangers which the Churches, for which he felt such a concern, were experiencing or expecting, may account for his lack of positive effort in the mission field. Nevertheless it is not without significance that the two missionaries who went out, in response to an appeal for ministers, to an island off Rio de Janeiro in 1557, and whom therefore many regard as the first modern missionaries, were recommended and appointed by Calvin himself.

But if he did not go abroad, he certainly strove to unite the Protestants in the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. He was firmly persuaded that a doctrinal basis could be formulated which would effect an organic union between the divisions of Protestants, and he energetically strove to convene

representatives from the various European nations to undertake this formulation. Replying to Archbishop Cranmer's invitation to him to come to Lambeth for a similar purpose he wrote,

I wish indeed it could be brought about that men of learning and authority from the different Churches might meet somewhere and, after thoroughly discussing the different articles of faith, should, by a unanimous decision, hand down to posterity some certain rule of faith... As to myself, if I should be thought of any use, I would not, if need be, object to cross ten seas for such a purpose.¹

He was not averse even to trying to navigate the turbulent waters that stretched between him and the Roman Catholic Church but due to many treacherous under-currents and obstacles for which the Catholics were responsible he had to abandon the attempt. The unity between Protestants at which he aimed was not an artificial or superficial one but one which consisted in an agreement on the fundamentals of the faith and unity in the Spirit, while allowing liberty in matters of form of worship and polity.

¹ Letter, April 1552.

2. The Spirit and the Ministry

Calvin has a clearly delineated conception of the constitution of the Church. Two main principles are operative: the formal principle is that the Word of God is solely regulative of the polity and policy of the Church; the material principle is the unique headship of Christ over His Church. Christ however undertakes to rule His Church through human offices by the Holy Spirit.

Josef Bohatec, in his detailed study of "Calvin's Lehre von Staat und Kirche",¹ claims that the Church for Calvin is essentially a "Pneumatocracy" rather than a "Christocracy".² Luther holds to the latter, emphasising Christ's government of the Church. Calvin, of course, in no whit derogates from the centrality or the headship of Christ, but he lays a significant accent on the constitutive place occupied by the Holy Spirit in the life and work of the Church. The Church is a living unity in the Spirit, - a community in which each member has a substantial participation and power in the Church according to his gifts. Bohatec describes Calvin's 'organic-Pneumatocratic' concept as achieving a harmonic, symmetric, coagulation of the members of the Church. Through the interdependence of the members and the accompanying features, there is a confluence of two ideas, namely that of the Church as an institution and as a society. Through the harmonic connection of the members and those who bear the office of the Word and of ruling and teaching in the Church there results an organic constitution of the Church which is diametrically opposed to the Romanist hierarchy of orders.³

1. Bohatec; J. Calvins Lehre von Staat und Kirche pp. 417-444.

2. Ibid. p. 433.

3. Ibid. p. 418.

It is of paramount importance to realise that Christ confers the power of the Spirit on the Church as a whole and not on an individual member. No individual can claim a monopoly of power. "Certainly," says Calvin in one of his letters,¹ "if God had wished one person to have rule over all, He would not have simply granted him a portion, but would have bestowed on him the plenitude of the Spirit." The truth is that the power of the Spirit is extended and distributed over the whole Church. This does not mean that all the members are to be reduced to the same level. The church is an organic unity in diversity. Two vital elements have to find their places, namely Integration and Articulation.² It is in the Pneumatocracy that these two are effected. Calvin has this in mind in commenting on the benediction in 2 Cor. 13. 14. "The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit is added because it is only under His guidance that we come to possess Christ and all His benefits. He (Paul) seems, however, at the same time, to allude to the diversity of gifts, of which he had made mention elsewhere, because God does not give the Spirit to every one in a detached way, but distributes to each according to the measure of grace, that the members of the Church, by mutually participating one with another, may cherish unity."

In line with the other Reformers, Calvin contends for the 'priesthood of all believers', but although all members of the Church are 'priests and kings', they differ relatively to their status and gifts, functions and offices. Since it is Christ who rules them all and distributes severally His power through the Spirit, the diversity of gifts does not tend to disunity.

¹ Letter CCCLXXIV. Vol. III.

² Bohatec. op. cit. p.421. ff.

Through the Holy Spirit as the principle of unity the Church is integrated as a totality; the Body of Christ is constituted, the unity of the members with Christ and with one another is established. There is no contradiction if the office of the Word is indicated as the connecting link of the organism, like the sinews of the body, because the uniting power keeps the ministry of the Word through the Spirit Who makes Christ real. Christ rules through His Spirit and His Word; the unity of the Word and Spirit is the unity of the Church.¹ It is easily recognised that Calvin gives the pivotal position to the preaching of the Word. Every member, regenerated by the Spirit of God has an essential part to play in the church, and all the bearers of the visible offices are 'pneumatic persons' having charismatic gifts. Each of the four offices of pastor, teacher, elder and deacons, is 'Pneumatic-charismatic',² and each as a servant of the Church has legitimate authority not in and of himself but because of his visible office and the service of the Gospel. There is nothing in Calvin's Church akin to the 'indelibility' of the imaginary charismatic gifts of the Roman Church. If the office-bearers are unworthy, they can be dismissed. The offices are always 'offices of grace' through the Spirit, and no 'indelible' magical or occult power is conferred on the office-bearers.

Indispensable, however, as the three offices of teacher, elder and deacon may be, the primary place is given to that of pastor - to the minister of the Word whose pre-eminence and dignity is merely a reflex of the Word itself. (IV.3.3.)

Pastors are spiritual prefects who receive a special sign from

¹ Bohatec, op. cit. p. 427.

² Idem.

God. They must have an inner call by the Spirit of God (together with an inward response thereto) and an outward call by the people; the twofold call being visibly ratified by the laying on of the hands of the pastors already ordained, (not that this has any magical significance as Calvin is careful to show), - an apostolic custom which is "highly useful both to recommend to the people the dignity of the ministry, and to admonish the person ordained that he is no longer his own master, but devoted to the service of God and the Church". (IV.3.16.) The ministers of the Word accordingly have unparalleled privileges and responsibilities, and Calvin is ever mindful of their high and holy calling. Writing in one of his letters¹ about 'faithful ministers', he says that the Spirit of God "ought to sound forth by their voice, so as to work with mighty energy. Whatever may be the amount of danger to be feared, that ought not to hinder the Spirit of God from having liberty and free course in those to whom He has given grace for the edifying of the Church". Similarly in commenting on the Spirit in Acts 5.9, Calvin says that the writer "means that Spirit which governed the Church by the Apostles. For when Christ says 'When the Spirit comes, He shall judge the world', He notes no other kind of authority than that which He exercises by the ministry of the Church".

Calvin regards Galatians 4.19 "My little children of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you," as "a remarkable passage for illustrating the efficacy of the Christian ministry". "True," he says, "we are 'born of God',² but, because He employs a minister and preaching as His instru-

¹ Letter CCXXIX.

² 1 Jn. 3.9.

ments for that purpose, He is pleased to ascribe to them that work which He Himself performs, through the power of His Spirit, in cooperation with the labours of man. Let us always attend to this distinction, that, when a minister is contrasted with God, he is nothing, and can do nothing, and is utterly useless; but, because the Holy Spirit works efficaciously by means of him, he comes to be regarded and praised as an agent. Still, it is not what he can do in himself, or apart from God, but what God does by him, that is there described. If ministers wish to do anything, let them labour to form Christ, not to form themselves in their hearers."

A contemporary theologian¹ writing on the Spirit-Shaliach refers to the Holy Spirit as the 'Shaliach' of Christ and that even He is "Shaliach in such a way that He does not draw attention to Himself or speak of His own Person but speaks only of Christ". The Apostles, he says, were related to Christ and His Shaliach-Spirit only by abiding in His Word. The Spirit-Shaliach relation of Christ to the apostle was contained in the doctrine of the 'kerygma', which can be described in terms of "objective sacramental preaching with an eschatological result, such that the original event, Christ incarnate, crucified and risen, becomes event all over again in the faith of the hearer. It is supremely in the Apostolate created by Christ as the human end of the New Testament revelation that the original unrepeatable event of the Resurrection takes place as a human word empowered by the Holy Ghost". A 'bishop' and ministers of the Word subsequent to Apostolic times, have the

¹ T.F. Torrance - Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 194 ff.

shaliach-relation only in a secondary sense, through the primary shaliach-relation of the Word-Spirit becoming event in the midst of the Church, becoming incarnate in men so that the Church becomes on earth, what it eternally is, the Body of Christ. Through the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, maintains Dr. Torrance, the eschatological nature of 'Kerygma' is understood. He is concerned in making clear that the relation between the Holy Spirit and the Church and believers, (and possibly in a special sense, ministers of the Word) is not that of identity but is an analogical relation, - a hypostatic union. "It is the doctrine of the relation of the personal presence of God to the Church such that the gift of the Spirit is identical with the Giver; such that the Spirit cannot be possessed any more than one person can possess another. It is possession in terms of 'koinonia', that is, in terms of the hypostatic union." A relation of identity, mystical identity, personal identity between the Bishop-Apostle and Christ, is wrong. The Holy Spirit cannot be passed on merely as a Gift. This unbends the hypostatic or Holy Spirit relation into a straight line and turns eschatology into temporal succession on the ground of this relation of identity."

Calvin, of course, does not make use of this 'eschatological' idiom but there are certain affinities between what this modern technical language intends to convey and Calvin's doctrine of preaching and his teaching about the office of the Spirit in this context. Both alike seek to avoid the dangers inherent in Luther's doctrine of preaching, just as Luther, in turn, abhors those of the Schwärmer or Spiritual enthusiasts

and of Zwingli. Luther reacts vehemently against any attempt to separate the Spirit from the Word preached. He insists strongly and justly on the objectivity of the Word as against the vagaries of the subjectivities of the Schwärmer and the similar tendencies of Zwingli. "A Christian," says Luther, "should certainly hold and say: God's Word is the same Word and just as much God's Word which is preached and read to prodigals, hypocrites and the godless as to truly pious Christians and the godly. And the Word (whether it bring forth fruit now or not) is the power of God, which makes all who believe on it blessed. Again, it is also condemnation and judgment to the godless... We say, teach and confess that the preacher of the Word, Absolution and Sacraments is not the man, but it is God's Word, voice, cleansing, binding, and efficacy. We are only the tools, fellow-workers and helpers of God, through whom God works and executes His work.

"We will not yield to them nor grant this metaphysical and philosophical distinction and differentiation, which is spun out of reason, that a man preaches, threatens, punishes, frightens and comforts, but the Holy Spirit works... Oh no, most certainly not! We conclude thus: God Himself preaches, threatens, punishes, frightens, comforts, baptizes, administers the Sacrament of the Altar and absolves... Thus I am certain that when I enter the pulpit to preach or stand at the lectern to read, it is not my word, but my tongue is the pen of a ready writer... So God and man must not be separated from one another, nor be distinguished according to the understanding and judgment of human reason; but we must say: What this

man, prophet, apostle or honest preacher and teacher says and does at God's command and word, that says and does God Himself, for he is God's mouthpiece or tool... Therefore, we straightway conclude, plainly and certainly: God works through His Word, which is like a vehicle or a tool whereby we learn to know Him in our heart."¹

Luther thus quite unambiguously asserts that in preaching it is God Himself who is speaking. The Holy Spirit so speaks the Word of preaching that to divorce the two is to negate the Word of God. The preacher's word, therefore, as he presents the Gospel, is veritably the Word of God. It can be admitted that the emphasis on the objectivity of the Word is a healthy one, but his further emphasis on the almost indissoluble union between the word of preaching and the Word of the Spirit tends towards being a mechanical opus operatum.

Zwingli, in an attempt to avoid what he quite rightly feels to be Luther's danger, namely that of unduly exalting the preacher, swings the pendulum almost to the other extreme. He reduces the Word to being merely a sign or symbol or witness to Christ and does not regard it as revelation or, in the true sense, a means of grace. Instead of allowing that the Spirit is in the Word probing the heart of the hearer, Zwingli makes a distinction between Verbum Dei externum - the external word preached as a pointer towards Christ - and Verbum Dei internum - the Holy Spirit working efficaciously in the heart. The two may thus work synchronously but separately, - that is, the

¹ Luther's Tischreden, Weimarer Ausgabe, III, pp. 672-674.

Spirit can deal directly with the heart apart from using the Word as His instrument. He can work on the heart and mind to persuade men to believe deeply what has already been presented to them in the preached word.

Neither Luther nor Zwingli, it is obvious, have the monopoly of truth, and there are important elements in both their positions. It falls to Calvin, by adopting a mediating position, to bring out the value of their extreme emphases in a synthesis. He holds strongly to the fact that the Holy Spirit is present in the Word and also to the equally certain fact of the witness of the Spirit in the believer's heart. His intention is to strike the balance between those, on the one hand, who make extravagant claims for the preached word and those on the other hand who aver "that it is a criminal transfer to mortal man of what properly belongs to the Holy Spirit, to suppose that ministers and teachers penetrate the heart and mind". (IV.1.6.)

In his able treatment of Calvin's doctrine of preaching, Parker¹ describes preaching as being the Word of God in a three-fold sense. First, in the sense that it is an exposition and interpretation of the Bible, which is as much the Word of God as if men "heard the very words pronounced by God Himself". Since the Spirit is the supreme author and interpreter of Scripture no man can expect His help unless he is anchored to the written Word. His expounding of the Gospel from Scripture will result in the preacher's handing on something at first-hand. All that he says must be derived from, measured and

¹ T.H.L. Parker, "The Oracles of God", p. 50 ff.

criticised by the Bible, and his hearers are advised to make the Bible their own norm for testing the preacher's deliverances. Infidelity to the Bible means the immediate forfeiting of the Spirit's power, for the Spirit has no respect for the surmisings of the unscriptural preacher. Lilley¹ is near the mark when he claims that "it was the virtual identification of God's Spirit and God's Word as the sum of His relations with man that constituted the distinguishing originality of Calvin's teaching". Because of the utter inability of man's mind of itself to arrive at a knowledge of God or of presenting adequate data about God, the preacher must acquiesce implicitly in what is handed to him in Scripture and must thoroughly acquaint himself with the whole of Scripture. "No one will ever be a good minister of the Word of God, except he first be scholar."²

How many ministers of the Word one sees who are so poorly trained in Holy Scripture!... For they have never made a habit of moulding themselves entirely to the language of the Holy Spirit, as good scholars. If a scholar is a man of parts, and his master is a good teacher, too, he will certainly not only remember what he has been taught, but will also retain some characteristic of his master, so that it will be said: 'He was at such and such a school.'³

Being imbued then with a knowledge of the Scriptures, and being competent in rightly dividing the Word of Truth, and, through an insight into human nature, being able to assess the need of the people, and, above all, having the aptitude and art of teaching, whereby he can make contemporary and

¹ A.L. Lilley, Religion and Revelation, p. 85.

² Opera XXXVI. p. 406. ³Opera LIV. p. 68.

applicable to his immediate hearers, the preacher is a fit minister of the Word and servant of the Spirit.

Preaching is the Word of God, secondly, in terms of the fact that the preacher has been called by the Holy Spirit. All the external qualifications are utter dross except the preacher is resolutely convinced in his inner consciousness that the Spirit of God has called him to the ministry of the Word. His preaching may be scriptural and eloquent, but, destitute of this inner call, it can never be the Word of God. Having the certainty of the call of the Spirit, however, the preacher, as the ambassador of God, speaks on God's authority, and his preaching is therefore as if God Himself is speaking.

We must not find this strange, for when the servants of God speak thus, they attribute nothing to themselves, but show to what they are commissioned and what charge is given to them; and thus they do not separate themselves from God. When a man is the envoy of a prince and has all authority to do what is committed to his charge, he, so to speak, borrows his prince's name. He will say: 'We do this: we ordain: we have commanded: we wish that to be done' ... Thus do also the servants of God, for they know that God has ordained them as His instruments and that He uses them in His service, so that they do nothing of their own ability, but it is the Master who guides them.¹

Thus the indispensable inner call soon makes its presence known, together with its accompanying graces, and likewise its absence cannot be easily camouflaged.

Whoever is concerned with the influence of the Holy Spirit, however he may boast that he is a minister of Christ, will nevertheless not prove himself to be such. At the same time, if you would have a full enumeration of spiritual weapons, doctrine must be conjoined with zeal, and a good conscience with the efficacy of the Spirit, and with other necessary graces.²

¹ Opera XXVI. p. 66.

² C. 2 Cor. 10.4.

The secret call of the Spirit which is, as Calvin describes it, "the honest testimony of our heart, that we accept the office offered us, not from ambition or avarice, or any other unlawful motive, but from a sincere fear of God, and an ardent zeal for the edification of the Church", (IV.3.11.), will equip the preacher with a holy confidence for his profound task. The majesty of preaching will further show itself

when a minister strives by means of power rather than of speech - that is, when he does not place confidence in his own intellect, or eloquence, but furnished with spiritual armour, consisting of zeal for maintaining the Lord's honour - eagerness for the raising up of Christ's kingdom - a desire to edify - the fear of the Lord - an invincible constancy - purity of conscience and other necessary endowments, he applies himself diligently to the Lord's work... He would have us not rest in outward masks, but depend solely on the internal power of the Holy Spirit.¹

Calvin is perfectly clear, however, that, despite the ambassadorial honour conferred on man, and God's willingness to speak through him by the Spirit after certifying the call, the Spirit is still Sovereignly free. Calvin refers² to Paul's view of the

minister as one that is a servant, not a master - an instrument, not the hand; and in short, as man, not God. Viewed in that aspect, he leaves him nothing but his labour, and that too dead and powerless, if the Lord does not make it efficacious by His Spirit. The reason is, that when it is simply the ministry that is treated of, we must have an eye not merely to man, but also to God, working in him by the grace of the Spirit - not as though the grace of the Spirit were invariably tied to the word of man, but because Christ puts forth His powers in the ministry which He has instituted, in such a manner that it is made evident, that it was not

¹ C. 1 Cor. 4. 20.

² C. 1 Cor. 3. 7.

instituted in vain. In this manner he does not take away or diminish anything that belongs to Him, with the view of transferring it to man.

No minister can therefore arrogate to himself the right to manipulate the Spirit because the Spirit has called him. "We are," says Calvin,¹ "Ministers of the Spirit, not as if we held Him inclosed within us, or as it were captive, - not as if we could at our pleasure confer His grace upon all...but because Christ, through our instrumentality, illuminates the minds of men, renews their hearts and...regenerates them wholly."

There is then a gulf fixed between Luther and Calvin on this issue. Luther's view of the Pneumatical office as conferring upon him the right to preach, involved the concept that the power of the Spirit of God is in some way bound to the external means of grace, and he inclined to the belief that every time he, as the minister of the Word preached, God is bound to preach. Calvin stands aghast at such a presumptuous and possessive grasping of the Holy Spirit on the part of a human creature. All he is prepared to say is that God, having called a man into the ministry of His Word, will probably bestow on him the power of the Spirit to make effective the words that fall from his human lips and make them the Word of God. Not for a moment, however, can man presume on the Holy Spirit; the most that he can do is commit himself to the sheer grace and sovereign liberty of the Spirit and humbly breathe "Veni, Creator Spiritus".

¹ C. 2 Cor. 3.6.

Preaching in the Spirit is the Word of God, thirdly, in the sense that it is Revelation. In and through it there is a self-manifesting and self-communicating of the hidden God through the openness of Christ. God through the ministry of the Word confronts man with the redemption which is in Christ; this is possible only in the Holy Ghost. The Spirit, however, works in no nebulous way by direct and immediate contact with the soul. Neither does He merely undertake a certain 'follow-up' technique after the Word has presented the truths which are to be believed. Rather does the Spirit take the human words, at His will and speaks through them as vehicles for His revelatory purpose. "And what is the mouth of God?" asks Calvin in a sermon on Deuteronomy.¹ "It is a declaration that He makes to us of His will when He speaks to us by His ministers." Again in commenting on 1 Pet. 1.25 he says,

It is indeed certain that those who plant and those who water are nothing; but whenever God is pleased to bless their labour, He makes their doctrine efficacious by the power of His Spirit; and the voice which is in itself mortal, is made an instrument to communicate eternal life.

As has been demonstrated there is nothing magical in preaching: the minister of the Word is obliged to use the same atmosphere as every other speaker and the ordinary mode of human speech, and possibly a degree of the right kind of eloquence. There is nothing essentially supernatural or divine about the actual speaking. The preaching as such is not Revelation; it becomes Revelation when God in utter grace adds the Holy Spirit to it. "We see how God works by the Word which is preached to us, that it is not a voice which

¹ Opera XXV. pp. 666-667.

only sounds in the air and then vanishes; but God adds to it the power of His Holy Spirit."¹ There is no case of separating between the external Word and the Spirit resident and waiting in the heart. The Revealing Spirit effects the Revelation of Christ through the actual preaching of the Word, conferring upon it the power which constitutes it the organ of God's grace. The quickening of Christ and the inestimable benefits of His salvation are there and then mediated to the soul, since at the same time as the Spirit empowers the preaching of the Word, He also breaks down the opposition in the mind and heart of the hearer, creating in him a confidence in the divinity of the Word and enabling him to embrace it.

The Holy Spirit then alone makes graphically and savingly contemporary the Revelation of God the Father once for all delivered in the finality of the Lord Jesus Christ; and this He does supremely in the preaching of the Word. It is in the light of this that Calvin knows the hand of God to be upon him and all true servants of the Word, enabling them to voice their experience - "We cannot better employ both our life and our death than by drawing to salvation those poor souls who are lost and on the road to eternal death."² Under the Spirit, the preaching of the Word as Revelation is redemptive and the preacher is pre-eminently conscious "that he is sent to procure the salvation of souls".³

¹ Opera LIV, p. 11.

² Opera LIII, p. 238.

³ Opera LIII, p. 235.

3. The Spirit and the Sacraments

The blessings of the Spirit are supremely available through the pure preaching of the Word and other similarly non-visible means of grace when faith is present. Such, however, is the weakness of men and the tenuous character of their faith that God accommodates Himself to their state in providing ocular and tangible helps or visible means of grace through which the Spirit can convey His benefits. For first the Lord teaches and trains us by His Word; next He confirms us by His sacraments... (IV.14.8.) Calvin defines a sacrament as "an external sign, by which the Lord seals on our consciences His promises of goodwill towards us, in order to sustain the weakness of our faith, and we in turn testify our piety towards Him both before Himself and before angels", or more succinctly as "a testimony of the divine favour towards us, confirmed by an external sign, with a corresponding attestation of our faith toward Him". (IV.14.1.)

Calvin, however, gives both a general and a specific meaning to the term 'sacrament'. In the wider sense he speaks of "all the signs that ever God gave men to certify and assure them of the truth of His promises". This description includes such signs as the tree of life marked out for Adam and Eve and the rainbow to which God drew Noah's attention, and all other similar 'sacramental' symbols which were intended to impinge beneficially upon man's physico-spiritual personality and convey a sense of God's good concern. Quite naturally, however, Calvin gives it a more restricted meaning in the context of the Christian dispensation. When he thinks of the

sacraments instituted by Christ he insists on the conjunction of the Word with the sign. The promises of God are to occupy the primary position and the sacraments must follow as corroborative seals of those promises and as a graphic representation of them.

Calvin is far from saying, however, that a sacrament is merely a sign - the elements being merely signs representing what is absent. For him the elements are signs which exhibit what is present. The sacraments not only point objectively to, and give a guarantee of, the blessings which are in Christ but present Christ Himself; they not only 'advertise a truth' but 'convey a Spirit'. It is imperative, however, to remember that the most indispensable factor of all is the active presence of the Holy Spirit. Without Him, as in all other contexts for Calvin, nothing avails.

For (as already quoted in part) first, the Lord teaches and trains us by His Word; next He confirms us by His sacraments; lastly, He illumines our mind by the light of His Holy Spirit, and opens up an entrance into our hearts for His Word and sacraments, which would otherwise only strike our ears, and fall upon our sight, but by no means affect us inwardly.
(IV.14.8.)

The elements themselves have no magical quality, nor must the minister who distributes them be unduly exalted in terms of ex opere operato. They have their due place and function, and certainly they are of considerable importance, but the sovereignty of the Spirit must not be usurped. In his comment on Acts 11.17 Calvin says, after favourably describing the elements and ministers,

When Christ is thus joined with the minister and the efficacy of the Spirit with the sign, there is so much attributed to the sacraments as is needful,¹ but that conjunction must not be so confused, but that men's minds being drawn from mortal and frail things, and things like to themselves, and from the elements of the world, they must learn to seek salvation at Christ's hand, and to look to the power of His Spirit alone; because he misses the mark of faith, whoever turns aside even but a little from the Spirit to the signs.

Calvin's aim then, always is to "vindicate the glory of the Holy Spirit of Christ, lest aught should be attributed to the ministers or to the elements".²

In assigning the office of increasing and confirming faith to the sacraments Calvin therefore does not suggest that there is a "kind of secret efficacy perpetually inherent in them by which they can of themselves promote or strengthen faith" but that "our Lord has instituted them for the express purpose of helping to establish and increase our faith.. The sacraments duly perform their office only when accompanied by the Spirit, the internal Master, whose energy alone penetrates the heart, stirs up the affections, and procures access for the sacraments into our souls. If He is wanting, the sacraments can avail us no more than the sun shining on the eyeballs of the blind, or sounds uttered in the ears of the deaf. Wherefore, in distributing between the Spirit and the sacraments, I ascribe the whole energy to Him, and leave only a ministry to them; this ministry, without the Agency of the Spirit, is empty and frivolous, but when He acts within, and exerts His power, it is replete with energy... In our hearts it is the work of the Holy Spirit to commence, maintain, cherish

¹ C.f. C. Tit. 3.5.

² Letter CCXLIV.

and establish faith... That the word may not fall upon our ear, or the sacraments be presented to our eye in vain, He shows that it is God who there speaks to us, softens our obdurate hearts, and frames them to the obedience which is due to His Word; in short, transmits those external words and sacraments from the ear to the soul. Both word and sacraments confirm our faith...and the Spirit also confirms our faith when, by engraving that assurance on our minds, He renders it effectual. Meanwhile it is easy for the Father of lights, in like manner as He illumines the bodily eye by the rays of the sun, to illumine our minds by the sacraments, as by a kind of intermediate brightness". (IV.14.9-11.)

In a significant passage in one of his letters¹ Calvin draws attention to two important truths relating to sacraments. "For with regard to the sacraments in general," he says, "we neither bind up the grace of God with them, nor transfer to them the work or power of the Holy Spirit, nor constitute them the ground of the assurance of salvation. We expressly declare that it is God alone, who acts by means of the sacraments and we maintain that their whole efficacy is due to the Holy Spirit, and testify that this action appears only in the elect." The first truth emphasised is that the sacraments are not absolutely necessary for salvation (although it is ingratitude and foolishness not to use them); the Roman Catholics make them indispensable, and Luther's doctrine tended towards that direction. Calvin declares that "Salvation...is from Christ alone, God its sole author...and

¹ Letter CCXXIV.

it is accepted only through the secret working of the Spirit... Remission...is from the Blood of Christ...by faith in His gospel...which He brings to perfection in our hearts by His Spirit."

The second truth is that the sacraments are effective only in the elect. This is obviously the case since the non-elect have not the prerequisite faith to embrace the promises and receive the benefits. The elect, having received the gift of faith from the Spirit will also receive the blessings of the sacrament, proferred to them by the same Spirit. Even the elect of the Old Testament partook (though in a less degree) of the same sacraments as Christians when, for instance, they drank of the Rock in the wilderness.¹ This happened through "the secret work of the Holy Spirit, who wrought in them in such a manner that Christ's flesh and blood, though not yet created, was made efficacious in them". The Spirit-wrought faith-relation to Christ is the standard throughout, and this becomes obvious in Calvin's treatment of the specific Christian sacraments - Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

(a) Baptism

Calvin describes Baptism, the first of the two Christian sacraments as

the initiatory sign by which we are admitted to the fellowship of the Church, that being ingrafted into Christ we may be accounted children of God. The end for which God has given it is, first, that it may be conducive to our faith in Him; and, secondly, that it may serve the purpose of a confession among men. (IV.15.1.)

¹ C. 1 Cor. 10.

It contributes to our faith three things. First, it is a sign of purification - of forgiveness and cleansing, of the deleting of the guilt and penalty of sins. There is a finality and once-for-allness about this remission and purging, and so rather than undergo baptism a second time, the believer who sins can look back to his baptism. Secondly, baptism "shows us our mortification in Christ and new life in Him. Christ by baptism has made us partakers of His death, ingrafting us into it," and He exhorts us to die to sin and rise to righteousness. "Those who receive baptism with true faith truly feel the efficacy of Christ's death in the mortification of their flesh, and the efficacy of His resurrection in the quickening of the Spirit..." Thus we are promised the "free pardon of sins and imputation of righteousness, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, to form us again to newness of life". (IV.15.5.)

God will always be with us by His Spirit so that we may be able to resist and repel the devil, sin, and the lusts of our flesh until we obtain the victory, so that we may live in the liberty of His kingdom which is the kingdom of righteousness.¹

The third benefit of baptism is that it shows that the believer is "so united to Christ Himself as to be partaker of all His blessings. For He consecrated and sanctified baptism in His own body, that He might have it in common with us as the firmest bond of union and fellowship which He deigned to form with us... For all the divine gifts held forth in baptism are found in Christ alone. And yet he who baptizes into Christ cannot but at the same time invoke the name of the

¹ Calvin's baptismal service; Ed. Amster. VIII. 33.

Father and the Spirit. For we are cleansed by His blood, just because our gracious Father, of His incomparable mercy, willing to receive us into favour, appointed Him Mediator to effect our reconciliation with Himself. Regeneration we obtain from His death and resurrection only, when sanctified by His Spirit we are imbued with a new and spiritual nature. Wherefore we obtain...in the Father the cause, in the Son the matter, and in the Spirit the effect of our purification and regeneration". (IV.15.6.)

These three benefits then are such as can be given by the Holy Spirit apart from baptism, and care must be taken not to ascribe too much importance to the actual water used. Calvin never tires therefore in reminding his readers of the source of blessing as, for instance, in his comment on Acts 22.10 when referring to the washing away of sins by baptism...

because it may seem that by this means more is attributed to the outward and corruptible element than is meet, the question is whether baptism be the cause of our purging. Surely forasmuch as the blood of Christ is the only means whereby our sins are washed away, and as it was once shed to this end, so the Holy Ghost, by the sprinkling thereof through faith, makes us clean continually. This honour cannot be translated to the sign of water without doing open injury to Christ and the Holy Ghost.

Likewise in his discussion of the new birth through the 'water' and the Spirit¹ he even dismisses the thought of the water here as being physical, and maintains that by it is meant nothing more than the inward purification and invigoration which is produced by the Holy Spirit. He does, however, urge strongly that in the sacrament of water baptism, these spiritual

¹ John 3.5.

blessings are made real, and an assurance of them given in a new way, to the consciousness of the recipient who has faith.

Faith, produced by the Spirit is, as in every context, given a cardinal place here. Without faith baptism is worthless. This is easily understood if baptism is administered to adults. Calvin, however, sets out to claim the validity of child baptism. His argument starts from those adults who were baptized without repentant faith but who, upon later attaining to faith, realise the latent worth of baptism. It is when the Spirit gives faith that the promises given in their baptism become operative for them. "For it comes to pass that the Spirit of God works afterward after a long time, that the sacraments may begin to show forth their force."¹ There is therefore no need for re-baptism. (Similarly re-baptism is not needed even if the baptizer was an apostate.) On the other hand, "whosoever has not this (faith) when he is grown up, in vain does he boast of the baptism of his infancy. For to this end does Christ admit infants by baptism, that so soon as the capacity of their age allows, they may addict themselves to be His".²

Thus Calvin makes the transition from baptized adults, who at the time of their baptism did not believe, to baptized infants who do not exercise a conscious faith. In both cases, at a later time, the reality (or unreality) of their baptism is made evident, when they do (or do not) enter in to the enjoyment of the blessings promised in the sacrament. Calvin intimates a number of indirect benefits of infant baptism,

¹ C. Acts 8.13. ² C. Acts 8.37.

such as the sense of gratitude and responsibility aroused in the parents and the members of the church who witness the scene and the sense of indebtedness in the child when he grows up and realises what has been done for him.

Calvin, due to his doctrine of the Spirit, however, must go further and claim that in a direct and real sense the child can be regenerated by the Spirit. The Spirit is sovereignly free and, as He demonstrated in the case of John Baptist and especially of our Lord Himself, age is no obstacle to His regenerating power.

If in Christ we have a perfect pattern of all the graces which God bestows on all His children, in this instance we have a proof that the age of infancy is not incapable of receiving sanctification. This, at least, we set down as incontrovertible, that none of the elect is called away from this present life without being previously sanctified and regenerated by the Spirit of God. As to their objection that, in Scripture, the Spirit acknowledges no sanctification save that from incorruptible seed, that is, the Word of God, they erroneously interpret Peter's words, in which he comprehends only believers who had been taught by the preaching of the gospel.¹ We confess, indeed, that the Word of the Lord is the only seed of spiritual regeneration; but we deny the inference that, therefore, the power of God cannot regenerate infants. This is as possible and easy for Him, as it is wondrous and incomprehensible to us. It were dangerous to deny that the Lord is able to furnish them with the knowledge of Himself in any way He pleases. (IV.16.18.)

Calvin here takes the liberty of saying even that "many He certainly has called and endued with the true knowledge of Himself, by internal means, by the illumination of the Spirit, without the intervention of preaching". (IV.16.19.)

When challenged on the point that penitence and faith are

¹ 1 Pet. 1.23.

prerequisites for baptism, and that infants are incapable of them, Calvin retorts that circumcision, the sign of repentance and faith, was administered to children, that they might later aspire to them. Similarly, in baptism, penitence and faith are not formed in them, "yet the seed of both lies hid in them by the secret operation of the Spirit". (IV.16.20.)

Calvin makes no small use of the fact of the children's being brought to Christ who, by His prayer and benediction, commends them to His Father.

If it is right that children should be brought to Christ, why should they not be admitted to baptism, the symbol of our communion and fellowship with Christ? If the kingdom of heaven is theirs, why should they be denied the sign by which access, as it were, is opened to the Church, that being admitted into it they may be enrolled among the heirs of the heavenly kingdom? How unjust were we to drive away those whom Christ invites to Himself, to spoil those whom He adorns with His gifts, to exclude those whom He spontaneously admits. (IV.16.7.)

On the analogy of the rite of circumcision, Calvin argues, infants are included in the divine covenant and are thus elect.

Seeing that God has adopted the children of the faithful before they be born, I conclude therefore that they are not to be defrauded of the outward sign; otherwise men shall presume to take that from them which God has granted them. Regarding the manifest grace of the Spirit, there is no absurdity therein if it follows after baptism in them.

Calvin is admittedly involved in difficulties at this juncture for he can be challenged as to how it is permissible to say that God has already adopted the children of the faithful; and whether the children of believers are automatically elect. He has always to face the possibility of these 'elect'

children's failing to exhibit the least graces of the Spirit in later life.

A kindred difficulty - that of the relation between election and faith and the work of the Spirit in this connection Calvin refuses to solve in the same way as Zwingli. The latter, in defending infant baptism, says that since election precedes faith, a consciousness of this gift of the Spirit is not indispensable at the time of baptism. Calvin, on the other hand, with his usual rigorous logic, is committed to the belief that the Spirit in some way infuses faith into the elect child. How this happens he does not profess to know. All he says is "I do not mean that faith begins at the moment of birth, but that all the elect enter life through faith, whatever be their age". Beyond that, he observes a reverent agnosticism.

By his refusal, however, to subscribe to the 'fiction' that all unbaptized infants are condemned, he steers clear of the concept of baptismal regeneration. Whatever other pitfalls appear in this sphere, this one is studiously avoided. Despite the difficulties involved in this sacrament, it is Calvin's desire throughout to maintain unimpaired the sovereign dignity of the Spirit.

(b) The Lord's Supper

The difficulties which beset Calvin's doctrine of the Spirit in the context of the sacrament of baptism have no place in that of the second sacrament, namely that of the Lord's Supper, primarily because the latter sacrament is exclusively

for adults, and infants can on no account participate. More than any of the other Reformers Calvin upholds the freedom of the Spirit in the sacrament of Bread and Wine.

The differences in their interpretation of the Sacrament between the Romanists, Luther and Zwingli are well known. The Romanists make the unqualified assertion that after the pronouncement of the words of institution, the substances of Bread and Wine become the substances of the Body and Blood of our Lord, thus guaranteeing His real and unavoidable presence to all and sundry who partake. Luther claims that the symbols envelop the unseen but real Body and Blood of Christ, and that the latter are found in, with and under the elements. Zwingli is content with saying that the symbols merely represent what is absent. Calvin, as the "theologian of the diagonal", again occupies the middle position between Luther and Zwingli and maintains that the elements exhibit what is present. Each in his own way, and Calvin as strongly as any, believes that there is in the sacrament a real communion between the participant and Christ; that there is in some real sense a partaking of the 'Flesh and Blood' of our Lord. It is about the manner in which this communion and participation are possible that they disagree, and it is at this point that Calvin claims that due respect has not been paid by the other Reformers to the exact nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament.

The pivotal question is, How is the participant related to Christ in the sacrament? Or from another angle, How or where does Christ exist now? Luther has his answer ready by using his twin concepts of 'ubiquity' and 'communicatio

idionatum'. His emphasis on the deity of Christ, and his insistence on excluding any elements in our conception of Him which are inconsistent with His Deity, tend to give the idea of the swallowing up of His humanity through the power of the Divine nature. Nevertheless they allow him to say that Christ being at God's 'right hand' (which is everywhere) is omnipresent or ubiquitous.

Calvin, on the other hand, adhering faithfully to the Scriptural view of the objective reality of Christ's glorified Humanity or rather Human Body, says that "Christ's humanity is bounded, according to the invariable rule, in the human body and is contained in heaven, where it was once received and where it will remain till He come to judgment". (IV.17.12.) He in turn contends that "no property may be assigned to the body of Christ inconsistent with His human nature". (IV.17.19.) In spite of this, however, he is convinced that the flesh and blood of Christ are somehow received in the sacrament - that the "one sole body of Christ which was offered up as a victim to reconcile us with God...is offered us in the Lord's Supper, because in order that Christ might communicate to us the grace of the salvation which He has procured, it behoves that body first to be appropriated by us and the flesh of Christ to be made vivifying to us, since from it we draw spiritual life". But the point at issue is, how, if Christ's body is localised in heaven, is the gulf bridged between it and the believer on earth.

Calvin's answer has been put succinctly as follows.¹

¹ Loofs, Dogmengeschichte 398.

"As distance of place seems to prevent the power of Christ's flesh coming to us, I solve the knot thus, - that Christ, although He does not change His place, descends to us by His power." "Christ, out of the substance of His flesh, breathes life into us, though the real flesh of Christ does not enter us." (IV.17.32.) From a comparison of texts it appears that Calvin equates the 'flesh' or 'body' of Christ with its power, making the essence of 'substance' to consist in its power.¹ Thus where the substance of Christ's body in its virtue and vitalising properties is active and efficacious, there, in effect, is the Body of Christ.

When Calvin is asked how this power becomes real to the believer, his immediate reply, of course, is, "Through the Holy Spirit". Christ "is spread abroad everywhere by the power of His Spirit, not by the substance of His flesh... He is present with us both in His Word and in the Sacraments... His flesh is in no sense projected into us that we may live thereby, but He poureth into us by the secret power of His Spirit His force and strength".²

The Lord by His Spirit bestows upon us the blessing of being one with Him in soul, body and spirit. The bond of that connection, therefore, is the Spirit of Christ, who unites us to Him, and is a kind of channel by which everything that Christ has and is, is derived to us. For if we see that the sun, in sending forth its rays upon the earth, to generate, cherish, and invigorate its offspring, in a manner transposes its substance into it, why should the radiance of the Spirit be less in conveying to us the communion of His flesh and blood? Wherefore, the Scripture, when it speaks of our

¹ C.f. Mitchell Hunter - The Teaching of Calvin, p. 180.

² C. Acts 1.11.

participation with Christ, refers its whole efficacy to the Spirit...it is owing to the Spirit alone that we possess Christ wholly, and have Him abiding in us. (IV.17.12.)

His comprehensive comment on 1 Cor. 11.24 ff. is representative of what Calvin has to say about the operation of the Spirit in the Sacrament.

Christ's body is really (as the common expression is) - that is, truly given to us in the Supper, to be wholesome food for our souls...our souls are nourished by the substance of the body, that we may truly be made one with Him, or what amounts to the same thing, that a life-giving virtue from Christ's flesh is poured into us by the Spirit, though it is at a great distance from us and is not mixed with us... But that participation in the body of Christ, which is presented to us in the Supper, does not require a local presence, nor the descent of Christ, nor infinite extension...for the Supper being a heavenly action, there is no absurdity in saying that Christ, while remaining in heaven, is received by us. For as to His communicating Himself to us, that is effected through the secret virtue of His Holy Spirit who can not merely bring together, but join in one, things that are separated by distance of place, and far remote... The body, which you do not at all see, is given to you as a spiritual repast. It seems incredible that we should be nourished by Christ's flesh which is at so great a distance from us. Let us bear in mind, that it is a secret and wonderful work of the Holy Spirit which it were criminal to measure by the standard of our understanding.

Some modern theologians claim that Calvin's doctrine of this sacrament can be explained in terms of a hypostatic union between the elements of bread and wine and the Body and Blood of Christ. The latter are 'eschatologically' present and it is claimed that Calvin refutes any view of the sacrament which depicts the "transubstantiation of the worldly elements in such a way that the analogical relation is denied".¹ It

¹ Torrance op. cit. p.199.

is certain that such a 'hypostatic union' is possible only in the Holy Ghost.

Calvin has a further suggestion to make as to the mode in which the benefits of the sacrament are received. Not only does he describe the power of Christ's body being radiated into the believer but, on the other hand, he suggests that the soul of the believer is raised by the Holy Spirit to the glorified body of Christ in heaven and so united with it as to receive of its life. "In order that we be capable of this participation, we must rise heavenward. Here therefore faith must be our resource, when all the bodily senses have failed."¹ Hunter² shows that Calvin combines the two views in his Reply to Westphal.³ "Christ is absent from us in the body, but, dwelling spiritually within us, so lifts us up towards heaven as to transfuse into us the vivifying power of His faith, just as we are nourished by the vital heat of the sun by means of its rays."

On the subjective side of this sacrament then, and the necessity of a positive, conscious faith, and the embracing of the Word and Promise, there do not arise the same difficulties as those of baptism (paedo-baptism). Faith, evidencing the Spirit's activity in preparing, and rendering worthy, the participant, is absolutely indispensable. Calvin takes a very strong line with those who seek to partake unworthily.

Christ, (he says),⁴ cannot be disjoined from His

¹ C. 1 Cor. 11.24.

² Op. cit. p. 182.

³ Ed. Amster. VIII. 658.

⁴ C. 1 Cor. 11.27.

Spirit. Hence...His body is not received as dead, or even inactive, disjoined from the grace and power of His Spirit... Now in what way could the man who is altogether destitute of a living faith and repentance, having nothing of the Spirit of Christ, receive Christ Himself. While, therefore, I acknowledge that there are some who receive Christ truly in the Supper, and yet at the same time unworthily, as is the case with many weak persons, yet I do not admit, that those who bring with them a mere historical faith (i.e. a mere assent to the gospel history), without a lively feeling of repentance and faith, receive anything but the sign. For I cannot endure to maim Christ (i.e. present and imagine Christ in half), and I shudder at the absurdity of affirming that He gives Himself to be eaten by the wicked in a lifeless state, as it were...

The efficacy of the sacrament does not depend on the worthiness of men...but on the faithfulness of God. "For God does not there represent in a delusive manner, to the wicked, the body of His Son, but presents it in reality: nor is the bread a bare sign to them, but a faithful pledge." We must differentiate between what God presents and holds out to the wicked and what they receive. "This food, otherwise health-giving, will turn out to their destruction, and will be converted into poison to those that eat unworthily."¹

In complete contrast to those who eat unworthily, in the Christian era, Calvin describes those in pre-Christian times who were given faith by the Spirit. In his comment on those who drank of the Rock in the wilderness² Calvin says,

Seeing that we now in the Supper eat the body of Christ and drink His blood, how could the Jews be partakers of the same spiritual meat and drink, when there was as yet no flesh of Christ that they could eat? I answer, that though His flesh did not as yet exist, it was, nevertheless, food for them. Nor is this an empty or sophistical

¹ Verse 29.

² 1 Cor. 10.4. referred to supra.

subtlety, for their salvation depended on the benefit of His death and resurrection. Hence, they required to receive the flesh and the blood of Christ that they might participate in the benefit of redemption. This reception of it was the secret work of the Holy Spirit, who wrought in them in such a manner, that Christ's flesh, though not yet created, was made efficacious in them... But...they ate it in their own way... Christ is now presented to us more fully, according to the measure of the revelation.

Calvin, in the light of the full and final revelation of Christ and His institution of the Lord's Supper, held it in very high regard and commended his people to participate regularly and frequently in this sacrament in which the Holy Spirit conveyed such precious benefits.

It clearly emerges then from the discussion of Calvin's conception of the work of the Spirit in the Fellowship - the communion of saints - that it is true not only that there is 'extra ecclesiam, nulla salus' - outside the Church, no salvation, but also that there is no Church, no Ministry of the Word, no Sacraments, outside of the Holy Spirit.

PART II.

CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT IN RELATION TO SUBSEQUENT
TEACHING ON THE SPIRIT, NOTABLY AMONG PURITANS AND QUAKERS.

P A R T I I

Calvin's doctrine of the Spirit in relation to subsequent teaching on the Spirit, notably among Puritans and Quakers

In our treatment of Calvin's thought on the Holy Spirit, little has been said about the controversial and polemical features of his contemporary situation as such. Certain explicit references had to be made, of course, in such contexts as that of his sacramental teaching. It has been implicit throughout, however, that he stands in strong opposition to certain schools of thought and experience. His unflinching and frequently vehement and scathing attacks on the Romanists on the one hand and the Anabaptists and Libertines on the other, on the basis of their false teaching on the Holy Spirit, are pregnant with meaning and indicative of what his position would be regarding a host of subsequent teachings. There can be inferred from his writings the attitudes he would most probably have adopted towards the "Deists", the champions of the "Enlightenment", and the "Rationalists" with their emphasis on reason and their corresponding antipathy towards certain forms of institutional Christianity. By similar inference we can have a fair idea as to his opinion of the Mystics, and, coming down to present days, even of such principles and practices, as are adopted by such movements as the Oxford Group, not to mention the galaxy of inglorious 'isms', 'osophies' and 'ologies' and a host of infamous luminaries, whose meteor flights have ended, or are to end, in an ocean grave, their names being "writ in water". It is not within the scope of the present thesis, however, to deal in detail

with any of these. Nevertheless the significance of Calvin's contribution can be brought into helpful focus in the light of the similarities and differences between the Puritans and Quakers in their teaching on the Holy Spirit, and the 'implications for their lives which the Puritans believed the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to possess'. By a comparison of his texts with those of some of the Puritan and Quaker writers, it can be seen that Calvin has much to say, in principle, in line with the more 'conservative' and the 'middle party' Puritans and that, in effect, he anticipates them in their opposition to the more radical Puritans and the Quakers.

In his valuable study of "The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience",¹ Dr Nuttall enumerates the four points which are frequently under dispute, all relating to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and which, he says, come nearer (i.e. than external differences) to the fundamental difference between Puritans and Quakers, although none of them is identical with it.

These four points concern:

- (a) The relation between the Holy Spirit and reason.
- (b) The relation between the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in Scripture. These two points may be associated in the one larger problem of 'the discerning of spirits' and of the criterion by which to judge.
- (c) The question whether spiritual revelations and inspirations had been an extraordinary dispensation and had ceased, or had been an ordinary dispensation and still continued. A possible position was that they had recurred, because the present age was an extraordinary, and perhaps the last, age.

¹ P. 155.

- (d) The question whether or no the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit involved intellectual infallibility and moral perfectibility.

A number of the quotations already made from Calvin's writings and some further ones to be adduced, show that he has, very decidedly, something to say on these questions. In many passages there are either direct or indirect references to one, or more, and possibly to every one, of the four points. We can do no better than, having taken up each of the four questions in turn, (or rather, as Dr Nuttall suggests, telescope the first two and then proceed to the third and fourth), allow Calvin to answer in his own words.

1. The Discerning of Spirits:
the place of Reason and the Word

It is rightly emphasised by Dr Nuttall that before discussing the means whereby the identity and motions of the Spirit may be established, there must be a consideration of the questions, what is the relation of the Holy Spirit to reason and conscience; how, and to (or through) what in man, the Spirit speaks; and whether the physical senses have any analogue in spiritual perception.

Calvin draws as clear a line of demarcation as any between 'unregenerate' and 'regenerate' reason. In his comment on John 1.9¹ and in several other passages, Calvin gives due and respectful attention to human reason in its natural, unregenerate state, acknowledging it as one of the differentia between man and the animal kingdom. From the 'light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world'

rays are diffused over all mankind... For we know that men have this peculiar excellence which raises them above other animals, that they are endued with reason and intelligence, and that they carry the distinction between right and wrong engraven on their conscience.

He tells us also (II.2.17.) that

from a general survey of the human race, it appears that one of the essential properties of our nature is reason, which distinguishes us from the lower animals, just as these by means of sense are distinguished from inanimate objects. For although some individuals are born without reason, that defect does not impair the general kindness of God, but rather serves to remind us, that whatever we retain ought justly to be ascribed to the Divine indulgence. Had God not so spared us, our revolt

¹

As already quoted in Part I, Ch. 2. p.29 ff.

would have carried along with it the entire destruction of nature.

In the diversity of rational gifts "we can trace some remains of the divine image distinguishing the whole human race from other creatures".

Calvin contends, however, that secular philosophers have set too high a value on human reason when they

maintain that reason dwells in the mind like a lamp, throwing light on all its counsels, and like a queen, governing the will - that it is so pervaded with divine light as to be able to consult for the best, and so endued with vigour as to be able perfectly to command... The intellect is endued with reason, the best guide to a virtuous and happy life, provided it duly avails itself of its excellence, and exerts the power with which it is naturally endued. (II.2.2.)

Despite the many challenges to the supremacy of reason, from the direction of the 'allurements of pleasure', the 'false semblance of good', and unruly passions, these philosophers maintain that human reason is sufficient for right government. (II.2.3.)

Philosophers have not been alone in indulging in this false optimism; ecclesiastical writers were also guilty of attributing too much power to the reason and, at the same time, the will of man. Nevertheless, to charge the intellect with perpetual blindness, (while maintaining its gross corruption through sin) so as to leave it no intelligence of any description whatever, is repugnant not only to the Word of God, but to common experience. We see that there has been implanted in the human mind a certain desire of investigating truth, to which it would never aspire unless some relish for

truth antecedently existed... Still...this love of truth fails before it reaches the goal...and it fails to discern what the knowledge is which it should study to acquire. (II.2.12.)

Still, however, man's efforts are not always so utterly fruitless as not to lead to some result. They are directed to two classes of objects - earthly things and heavenly things; the former relating not to God and His kingdom, to true righteousness and future blessedness, but to the present life, being in a manner confined within its boundaries; the latter comprising the pure knowledge of God, the method of true righteousness and the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom. To the former belong matters of policy and economy, all mechanical arts and liberal studies, logic, medicine, mathematics, social and civil order and honesty. Human reason is quite at home in these spheres.

Calvin suffers no illusions about the limits of reason and he proceeds to explain what the power of human reason is in regard to the kingdom of God, and spiritual discernment, which consists chiefly of three things - the knowledge of God, the knowledge of His paternal favour towards us, which constitutes our salvation, and the method of regulating our conduct in accordance with the Divine Law. With regard to the former two, but more properly the second, men otherwise the most ingenious are blinder than moles. Occasional apposite remarks and shrewd insights may have been made into the nature of God by philosophers - sufficient to render them inexcusable.

Still, though seeing, they saw not. Their discernment was not such as to direct them to the truth, far less to enable them to attain it, but resembled that of the bewildered traveller, who sees the flash of lightning glance far and wide for a moment, and then vanish into the darkness of the night, before he can advance a single step... In short, not one of them even made the least approach to that assurance of the divine favour, without which the mind of man must ever remain a mere chaos of confusion. To the great truths, what God is in Himself, and what He is in relation to us, human reason makes not the least approach. (II.2.18.)

Thus, although natural perspicacity is a gift of God, and the liberal arts, and all the sciences by which wisdom is acquired, are gifts of God, they are confined within their own limits; for into God's heavenly kingdom they cannot penetrate. Hence they must occupy the place of handmaid, not of mistress. Indeed, of themselves they are empty and worthless. The individual must acknowledge that he knows nothing but what he has learned from God, and giving up his own understanding, must resign himself unreservedly to Christ's guidance by the Spirit.¹

Even in the third branch of the knowledge of spiritual things, namely, the method of properly regulating the conduct - the knowledge of the works of righteousness - a branch in which the human mind seems to have somewhat more discernment than in the former two, it is still deplorably impotent. It may be true in some cases that the intellect is not mistaken in the general definition or essence of certain matters, but that deception begins as it advances farther, namely, when it descends to particulars. But this by no means holds universally... Indeed, if we would test our reason by the Divine Law, which is a perfect standard of righteousness, we

¹ C. 1 Cor. 3.19.

should find how blind it is in many respects. Our reason is exposed to so many forms of delusion, is liable to so many errors, stumbles on so many obstacles, is entangled by so many snares, that it is ever wandering from the right direction. (II.2.22-25.)

With all the good will in the world, then, Calvin can do no other than pronounce that human discernment is so defective and lost, that the first step of advancement in the school of Christ is to renounce it. Like a veil interposed, it prevents us from beholding divine mysteries, which are revealed only to babes. There must then, be a capitulation of the reason to God in utter realisation of His ownership. Our own reason is not to rule our acts and counsels, and Calvin commends the "proficiency of him who, taught that he is not his own, has withdrawn the dominion and government of himself from his own reason that he may give them to God". The first step is to abandon ourselves, and devote the whole energy of our minds to the service of God. By service, he means not only that which consists in verbal obedience, but that by which the mind, divested of its own carnal feelings, implicitly obeys the call of the Spirit of God. This transformation (which Paul calls the renewing of the mind¹) though it is the first entrance to life, was unknown to all the philosophers. They give the government to reason alone, thinking that she alone is to be listened to; in short they assign to her the sole direction of the conduct. But Christian philosophy bids her give place, and yield complete submission to the Holy Spirit, so that the

¹ Rom. 12.2; Eph. 4.23.

man no longer lives, but Christ lives and reigns in him.

(III.7.1.). The reiterated call is: "deny yourself, renounce your own reason, and direct your whole mind to the pursuit of those things which the Lord requires of you, and which you are to seek only because they are pleasing to Him."

We must give up our own understanding and renounce the wisdom of the flesh, and thus we must present our minds to Christ empty that He may fill them... It is by the guidance of the Spirit that it is brought to allow itself to be placed under control and remain in a voluntary captivity.¹

When drawn thus to Christ, by the Spirit,

we are both in mind and spirit, exalted far above our own understanding. For the soul, when illumined by Him, receives as it were a new eye, enabling it to contemplate heavenly mysteries, by the splendour of which it was previously dazzled. And thus, indeed, it is only when the human intellect is irradiated by the light of the Holy Spirit that it begins to have a taste of those things which pertain to the kingdom of God; previously it was too stupid and senseless to have any relish for them. (III.2.34).

Calvin has an informative comment on 1 Cor. 2.11 when he discusses the relation between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God. He advises us to

observe that the 'spirit of a man' is taken here for the soul, in which the intellectual faculty, as it is called, resides. For Paul would have expressed himself inaccurately if he had ascribed this knowledge to a man's intellect, or in other words, the faculty itself, and not to the soul, which is endued with the power of understanding.

From this and other such comments as the answer to his question:

What is the method of hearing and learning the things of God? It is when the Spirit, with a wondrous and special energy, forms the ear to hear and the mind to understand, (II.2.20).

1. 1. C. 2. Cor. 10.5.

it can be concluded that Calvin gives a not insignificant place to the regenerate mind. He is never in danger (as some of the Quakers were accused of being) of equating the Spirit with man's spirit or reason but he does suggest that, among other elements, the reason is one on which the Spirit works and to which He addresses Himself.¹ He does not allow for a moment that the Spirit initiates something in the mind and then leaves the mind to itself and its own enlightened competence as if at the Spirit's touch something was happening all at once and once for all. He does not say that "our minds are illuminated in a single day, so as afterwards to see of themselves..." but there must be continued progress and increase. The spirit of the mind - the new mind - must be continually renewed by the Divine and heavenly Spirit.² This unceasing dependence of the renewed mind on the Spirit is axiomatic with Calvin and he nowhere allows the mind to hover vaguely or itself to discover and arrange its content of truth. Its content, as we shall see, is exclusively prescribed. Calvin, despite his almost unimpeachable, logical mind, would be the last to claim any power for it itself, and always confesses his utter debt to the One who imparts to him the content of his thought. Moreover, in the last analysis, not only his thought-content but also his thought-forms are prescribed, since he would claim that his categories are not philosophical and rational but theological-scriptural.

¹ C.f. C. Acts 15.12. The effect of the Spirit's operations in the council is that "they yielded forthwith to reason".

² C. Eph. 4.23.

Furthermore, while studiously avoiding any equating of the Spirit with conscience, he would be in substantial agreement with those Puritans who advocated liberty of conscience, and claimed that the enlightened conscience owed its illumination and its increasing sensitivity to the Spirit. But here again he would emphasise that the Spirit and the conscience do not function in a vacuum.

While acknowledging therefore the place of reason and conscience and their association with the Spirit, Calvin goes farther, and, by his insistence on the Inner Testimony of the Spirit, introduces an element which is supra-rational and supra-moral (and incidentally shows his aversion to any 'hat-box' faculty psychology regarding the Spirit). With certain provisos it might be correct to say that the Spirit works in terms of an 'intuitive', spiritual perception given in 'experience' as a whole, rather than in discursive ratiocination.

By knowledge (says Calvin (III.2.14.)) we do not mean comprehension, such as that which we have of things falling under human sense. For that knowledge is so much superior, that the human mind must far surpass and go beyond itself in order to reach it. Nor even when it has reached it does it comprehend what it feels, but persuaded of what it comprehends not, it understands more from mere certainty of persuasion than it could discern of any human matter by its own capacity... What our mind embraces by faith is every way infinite; this kind of knowledge far surpasses all understanding.

Spiritual knowledge comes "rather as confirmed by a belief of the divine veracity than taught by any demonstration of reason... The knowledge of faith consists more of certainty than discernment".

It is of interest to compare the above passage with one from Thomas Goodwin.¹

Reason indeed suberveth...but reason will never alone work out these mysteries... If we read the Scriptures and to get the meaning of them, observe the connection of one thing with another by reason, yet there comes often a light of the Spirit beyond the height of reason, which, by that observation of the connection, seals up this to be the Holy Ghost's meaning; so as the Holy Ghost is to faith still His own interpreter. For else the Scripture were of private interpretation, which it is not, 2 Pet. 1.20. For such is ratio humana to the Spirit.

Of similar interest^{it} is to compare with Calvin's words, Nuttall's quotations² from Richard Sibbes³.

A carnal man can never be a good divine, though he have never so much knowledge. An illiterate man of another calling may be a better divine than a great scholar. Why? Because the one hath only notional knowledge, discursive knowledge... It is a knowledge with a taste... God giveth knowledge per modum gustus. When things are to us as in themselves, then things have a sweet relish... How do you know the word to be the word? It carrieth proof and evidence in itself. It is an evidence that the fire is hot to him that feeleth it, and that the sun shineth to him that looks on it; how much more doth the word... I am sure I felt it, it warmed my heart, and converted me. There is no other principle to prove the word, but experience from the working of it.

And again from Hollinworth:⁴ "He that sees the Sun, knows it is bright and light; he that tastes honey, knows it is sweet." And Owen:⁵ "He gives αἰσθησιν πνευματικῆν

¹ Works 1861 edn. IV. Quoted by Nuttall op. cit. p. 38.

² P. 39 op. cit.

³ Works III. 434 iv. 334 f. 363; II. 495 iv. 412.

⁴ The Holy Ghost on the Bench, p. 76.

⁵ J. Owen, "Divine Original", p. 94.

a spiritual sense, a Taste of the things themselves upon the mind, Heart and Conscience; when we have *αἰσθητήρια γεγυμνασμένα* senses exercised to discern such things." Also F. Rous,¹ "Sensus non fallitur circa objectum,...the Sun shines, or the Swan is white, because the unhindered sense hath apprehended it to be so."

All these have affinities with such a passage as Calvin's (viewed in the light of the Inner Testimony) (I.7.2.)

As to the question, How shall we be persuaded that it (the Word) came from God without recurring to a decree of the Church? it is just the same as if it were asked, How shall we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter? Scripture bears upon the face of it as clear evidence of its truth, as white and black do of their colour, sweet and bitter of their taste.

Nuttall cites also the popular use of the simile of light by the Puritan writers, and in this connection it is interesting to note Calvin's comment on Ephesians 5. 8 and 9. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light; For the fruit of the light (Fructus enim lucis) is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." Calvin paraphrases Paul - "You ought to be very different persons from what you formerly were; for out of darkness God hath made you light."

...Light is the name given to those who are enlightened by the Spirit of God; for...he calls them children of light, and draws the inference, that they ought to walk in light, because by the mercy of God they had been rescued from darkness. We are said to be light in the Lord, because, while we are out of Christ, all is under the dominion of Satan, whom we know to be the Prince of darkness.

¹ Works, p. 135.

It is noteworthy that Calvin uses lucis in verse 9 - translating *φωτός* instead of *πνεύματος* - 'the fruit of the light', a reading which he believes to be more consistent. The children of the light will walk in the light, "when they do not live according to their own will, but devote themselves entirely to obedience to God, - when they undertake nothing but by His command. Besides, such obedience is testified by its fruits, such as goodness, righteousness, and truth".

Nevertheless, whatever are the terms or figures used to describe the mode of operation or the effects of the Spirit, the cardinal question concerns the method of discerning the presence and work of the Spirit and distinguishing between His deliverances and those of men's fancies. Calvin's answer has, of course, been implicit in some of the passages already quoted. He does not highly rate reason or conscience as such as criteria for judging or 'testing the spirits', and as would be expected from his whole theological and ecclesiastical attitude to the Church of Rome, he is loath to ascribe any authority to the church in this matter. Sibbes (as quoted by Nuttall op. cit. p. 43) is merely echoing Calvin when he says,

There is a great difference between us and our adversaries... They say we must believe...because of the Church. I say no. The church, we believe, hath a kind of working here, but that is in the last place. For God Himself in His word, He is the chief. The inward arguments from the word itself, and from the Spirit they are the next. The church is the remotest witness, the remotest help of all.

Calvin (I.7.1.) reminds us that

A most pernicious error has very generally prevailed; namely, that Scripture is of importance only in so

far as conceded to it by the suffrage of the Church; as if the eternal and inviolable truth of God could depend on the will of men. With great insult to the Holy Spirit it is asked, Who can assure us that the Scriptures proceeded from God;... what is to become of miserable consciences in quest of some solid assurance of eternal life, if all the promises with regard to it have no better support than man's judgment... Nothing, therefore, can be more absurd than the fiction, that the power of judging Scripture is in the Church, and that on her nod its certainty depends. When the Church receives it, and gives it the stamp of her authority, she does not make that authentic which was otherwise doubtful or controverted, but, acknowledging it as the truth of God, she, as in duty bound, shows her reverence by an unhesitating assent.

Despite his refusal to accede authority to the Church in this matter, he does acknowledge that the 'communion of the saints' has a certain regulative and valuable function in the 'discerning of spirits'. He recognises the difficulties involved in the claim of an individual believer to discern spirits. Commenting on 1 Jn. 4.1 he says,

If every one has the right and the liberty to judge, nothing can be settled as certain, but on the contrary the whole of religion will be uncertain. To this I answer, that there is a twofold trial of doctrine, private and public. The private trial is that by which every one settles his own faith, when he wholly acquiesces in that doctrine which he knows has come from God; for consciences will never find a safe and tranquil port otherwise than in God. Public trial refers to the common consent and polity of the Church; for as there is danger lest fanatics should rise up, who may presumptuously boast that they are endued with the Spirit of God, it is a necessary remedy, that the faithful meet together and seek a way by which they may agree in a holy and godly manner. But as the old proverb is too true, 'So many heads, so many opinions', it is doubtless a singular work of God, when He subdues our perverseness and makes us to think the same thing, and to agree in a holy unity of faith.

An instance of this is given in the account of the

Jerusalem Council.¹ "Luke giveth us to understand that the Spirit of God did so reign in that assembly, that they yielded forthwith to reason..." It is "a lawful council, when the truth of God alone, so soon as it is once come to light, maketh an end of all controversies; and assuredly it is effectual enough to appease all discord when the Spirit beareth the chief sway".

Calvin, however, proceeds to warn us that²

what Papists under this pretence hold, that whatever has been decreed in councils is to be deemed as certain oracles, because the Church has once proved them to be from God, is extremely frivolous. For though it be the ordinary way of seeking consent, to gather a godly and holy council, when controversies may be determined according to God's word; yet God has never bound Himself to the decrees of any council. Nor does it necessarily follow, that as soon as a hundred bishops or more meet together in any place, they have duly called on God and inquired at His mouth what is true; nay, nothing is more clear that they have often departed from the pure word of God. Then in this case also the trial which the Apostle prescribes ought to take place, so that the spirits may be proved.

The above has affinities, in retrospect with the Apostolic *κοινωνία*, and in prospect with the 'ecclesiastical' ideal of "Foxoman-unity" or the Quaker charismatic principle of seeking the unity of the Spirit in 'the sense of the meeting'.³ This does not mean that George Fox would or could draw upon Calvin for corroboration for his practices in this respect or for his "Christocentric criterion with its ethical connotation", in which he associated 'the light within' with Christ and claimed

¹ C. Acts 15.12. ² C. 1 Jn. 4.1.

³ Nuttall, op. cit. p. 46; 6, note 8.

that, because he had Christ constantly before him, he could define the light within as 'that which shows a man evil'. The end-result in both Calvin and Fox purports to be ethical, or ethico-spiritual, but the means whereby they attain it differ.

It is evident then, that Calvin's criterion for the 'discerning of spirits' is not reason, or conscience or one which can be described as 'Christocentric', whether ethical or ecclesiastical - although, no doubt, all these have their part to play. Beyond dispute his cardinal criterion is the Word of God - the Scripture. The relation of the Holy Spirit to the Word has already been discussed¹ and for the present context four relations of the Spirit to the Word should be observed. The Spirit is the Inspirer of the Word; bears His witness to the Word; speaks through, in or by the Word; is tested by the Word.

The first point has been laboured, and at this juncture there is no need to do more than underline quotations already made, such as Calvin's description of the authors of Scripture as "certi et authentici Spiritus Sancti amanuenses, ... verba quodammodo dictante Christi Spiritu". (IV. 8, 9 and 8.) Similarly his comments on Paul's words in 2 Tim. 3.16:

In order to uphold the authority of Scripture, he declares that it is divinely inspired; for if it be so, it is beyond all controversy that men ought to receive it with reverence. This is a principle which distinguishes our religion from all others, that we know that God has spoken to us, and are

¹ Part I, Ch. 3.

fully convinced that the prophets did not speak at their own suggestion, but that, being organs of the Holy Spirit, they only uttered what they had been commissioned from heaven to declare.

Enough has been said also about the indispensability of the Spirit in the witness he bears to the Word, in the sense that the Word is unavailing apart from the work of the Spirit. No Puritan or Quaker ever made it clearer than Calvin that the letter of the Word is dead without the light and life of the Spirit who originally produced it. There is no need to multiply such passages as the one in which he says that

we have no great certainty of the word itself, until it be confirmed by the testimony of the Spirit. For the Lord has so knit together the certainty of His Word and His Spirit, that our minds are duly imbued with reverence for the Word when the Spirit shining upon it enables us there to behold the face of God.
(I.9.3.)

The difficulties arise and the aberrations occur, however, in regard to the reverse side of this "knitting together". Even though general agreement were reached as to the dependence of the Word on the Spirit, it would not imply, by any means, that men are similarly agreed as to the dependence of the Spirit on the Word. It is to this latter point that we must now attend, or rather to the twofold truth that the Spirit speaks through the Word and is tested by the Word.

If we aspire to a genuine contemplation of God, we must go (says Calvin) to the Word, where the character of God, drawn from His works, is described accurately and to the life; these works being estimated, not by our depraved judgment, but by the standard of eternal truth. If we turn aside from it, how great soever the speed with which we move, we shall never reach the goal, because we are off the course. We should consider that the brightness of the Divine countenance, which even an apostle declares to be

inaccessible,¹ is a kind of labyrinth - a labyrinth to us inextricable, if the Word do not serve us as a thread to guide our path; and that it is better to limp in the way, than run with the greatest swiftness out of it. (I.6.3.)

Faith, produced only by the Spirit, is essential if man is to contemplate God and to be 'in the way', and Calvin makes this clear in his comment on one of the verses with which Nuttall heads one of his chapters² - "The Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God." He firmly joins faith and the Word of God, calling them one,

because the word is the object of faith, and cannot be applied to our use but by faith; as faith again is nothing, and can do nothing, without the word... There is no man of any rank who is not bound to be a soldier of Christ. But if we enter the field unarmed, if we want our sword, how shall we sustain that character.

Calvin therefore has hard words to say to those who, (whether as individuals or churches) in by-passing or under-estimating the value of the Word, are moving 'out of the way', or are unequal to the battle. One of these who comes under Calvin's censure is Sadoleto. In his 'reply' to him,³ Calvin says

When you describe it (the Church) as that which in all parts, as well as at the present time, in every region of the earth, being united and consenting in Christ, has been always and everywhere directed by the one Spirit of Christ, what comes of the Word of the Lord, that clearest of all marks, and which the Lord Himself, in pointing out the Church, so often recommends to us? For seeing how dangerous it would be to boast of the Spirit without the Word, He declared that the Church is indeed governed by the Holy Spirit, but in order that that government might

¹ 1 Tim. 6.16. ² Op. cit. Ch. 1.

³ Calvin's Tracts Vol. I. p. 36.

not be vague and unstable, He annexed it to the Word. For this reason Christ exclaims, that those who are of God hear the Word of God - that His sheep are those who recognise His voice as that of their shepherd, and any other voice as that of a stranger... The Church is made holy to the Lord by the washing of water in the Word of life... Well then does Chrysostom admonish us to reject all who, under the pretence of the Spirit, lead us away from the simple doctrine of the Gospel, - the Spirit having been promised not to reveal a new doctrine, but to impress the truth of the gospel on our minds... Papists and Anabaptists...when they boast extravagantly of the Spirit, the tendency certainly is to sink and bury the Word of God, that they make room for their own falsehoods. And you Sadolet, by stumbling on the very threshold, have paid the penalty of that affront which you offered to the Holy Spirit, when you separated Him from the Word. For, as if those who seek the way of God were standing where two ways meet, and destitute of any certain sign, you are forced to introduce them as hesitating whether it be more expedient to follow the authority of the Church, or to listen to those whom you call the inventors of new dogmas. Had you known, or been unwilling to disguise the fact, that the Spirit goes before the Church, to enlighten her in understanding the Word, while the Word itself is like the Lydian Stone, by which she tests all doctrines, would you have taken refuge in that most perplexing and thorny question? Learn then, by your own experience, that it is no less unreasonable to boast of the Spirit without the Word, than it would be absurd to bring forward the Word itself without the Spirit.

How true it is that "as soon as the Spirit is separated from the Word of Christ, the door is open to all kinds of delusions and impostures".¹

The Spirit then speaks in, by and through the Word and, more important still, must be tested by the Word. It is the Word which is the touchstone of the Spirit rather than vice versa. George Fox on the other hand insists to say about the Scriptures that 'ye holy ghost yt gave them forth was the Judge and Touchstone'.²

¹ C. Jn. 16.14.

² G. Fox, Short Journal, ed. H. Penny, pp. 1. f.

Calvin adopts a judicious balance in his comment on "Try the Spirits".¹

It may be asked, whence have we this discernment? They who answer, that the Word of God is the rule by which everything that men bring forward ought to be tried, say something, but not the whole. I grant that doctrines ought to be tested by God's word; but except the Spirit of wisdom be present, to have God's word in our hands will avail little or nothing, for its meaning will not appear to us; as for instance, gold is tried by fire or touchstone, but it can only be done by those who understand the art; for neither the touchstone nor the fire can be of any use to the unskilful. That we may then be fit judges, we must necessarily be endowed with and directed by the Spirit of discernment. But as the Apostle would have commanded this in vain, were there no power of judging supplied, we may with certainty conclude, that the godly shall never be left destitute of the Spirit of wisdom as to what is necessary, provided they ask for Him of the Lord. But the Spirit will only thus guide us to a right discrimination, when we render all our thoughts subject to God's word; for it is, as it has been said, like the touchstone, yea, it ought to be deemed most necessary to us; for that alone is true doctrine which is drawn from it.

Thus Calvin demonstrates the integral inter-relation and interdependence of the Spirit and the Word. His insistence on the unique quality of the Word and its office as touchstone of the Spirit leads us on to ask the question which has, by implication, already been answered, namely, 'whether spiritual revelations and inspirations had been an extraordinary dispensation and had ceased, or had been an ordinary dispensation and still continued'.

¹1 Cor. 14.1.

2. Spiritual Revelations

There is no doubt that Calvin's high doctrine of the Word is grounded on his conviction of its finality, or in other words, of the fact that the New Testament dispensation was extraordinary. This means that conditions obtained then which were unrepeatable - conditions in which the Spirit spoke in an exclusive manner. Calvin, of course, would disagree with Harnack's jibe that by this concept of revelation 'the Spirit was chased away into a book', but would be in hearty agreement with the Puritan position as described by Baxter.¹

The Holy Spirit, by immediate inspiration, revealed unto the apostles the doctrine of Christ, and caused them infallibly to indite the Scriptures. But this is not that way of ordinary illumination now.

John Owen is simply re-thinking Calvin's thoughts when he says of the Spirit that "In the continuation of His Work he ceaseth from putting forth those extraordinary effects of His Power which were needful for the laying the Foundation of the Church in the World".²

What Calvin says of the Prophets³ he would apply to the whole revelation of Scripture.

God addresses His word also indiscriminately to others, whomsoever He is pleased to teach by His Word, but He speaks to and addresses His Prophets in a peculiar way. For He makes them the ministers and heralds of His Word, and puts, as it were, into their mouth what they afterwards bring forth to the

¹ Works II. 104.

² Πνευματολογία II. ii. 4.

³ C. on Minor Prophets, Vol. 1, p. 112, Vol. 2, p. 19.

people...for the Lord did not simply address the Prophet in a common way, but furnished him with instructions, that he might afterwards teach the people, as it were, in the person of God Himself... It is then only that this authority exists, when God Himself speaks by men, and the Holy Spirit employs them as instruments. For the Prophet brings not forward any empty title: he does not say that he is a high priest of the tribe of Levi... He alleges no such things, but says that the Word of God was deposited with him.

Thus for Calvin, as to the whole of Scripture, "the doctrine herein contained was dictated by the Holy Spirit, for our use, and confers benefits of no ordinary kind on those who attentively peruse it".¹

Calvin is convinced that the Apostolic times were characterised by marks that, ever since, are to be conspicuous by their absence. He speaks

of those singular gifts wherewith God would have certain endued at the beginning of the gospel to beautify Christ's kingdom... The excellent graces of the Spirit are heaped upon them, in which God showed to His Church, for a time as it were, the visible presence of His Spirit, that He might establish for ever the authority of His gospel, and also testify that His Spirit shall be always the governor and director of the faithful.²

In discussing the special forbidding of the Spirit when the Apostles would have preached the Word in Asia, Calvin remarks,

If Paul taught nowhere but whither he was led by the Spirit, what certainty shall the ministers have at this day of their calling, who are certified by no oracles when they must speak or hold their peace? I answer, Seeing that Paul's province and charge was so wide, he had need of the singular direction of the Spirit.³

¹ Argument to Comm. Joshua.

² C. Acts 8.16.

³ C. Acts 16.6.

By these and kindred passages Calvin leaves us in no doubt about his conception of the exclusive revelation of the Spirit in New Testament times and of the sufficiency and finality of the truth deposited in the Scriptures. He succinctly states - "Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which as nothing useful and necessary to be known has been omitted, so nothing is taught but what it is of importance to know."

(III.21.3.) In the light, therefore, of the relation of the Spirit to the authors of Scripture,

their writings are to be regarded as the oracles of God, whereas others have no other office than to teach what is delivered and sealed in the holy Scriptures. We conclude, therefore, that it does not now belong to faithful ministers to coin some new doctrine, but simply to adhere to the doctrine to which all, without exception, are made subject.
(IV.8.9.)

Moreover "the office which He (Christ) assigns to the Holy Spirit is to bring to remembrance what His own lips had previously taught". (Idem. 8.)

In face of all this it is not in the least surprising that Calvin's writings abound in diatribes against those who lay extravagant and presumptuous claims to having the Spirit in the same sense as those of Apostolic times, and that their own times are uniquely favoured by the Spirit's visitation in such a manner as to enable them to abandon and to supersede the Word.

Mahomet and the Pope (Calvin says) agree in holding this as a principle of their religion, that Scripture does not contain a perfection of doctrine but that something loftier has been revealed by the Spirit. From the same point the Anabaptists and Libertines, in our own time, have drawn their absurd notions.

But the Spirit that introduces any doctrine or invention apart from the Gospel is a¹ deceiving spirit and not the Spirit of Christ.

Again, he says that

many to the end they may amplify the grace of the Spirit, feign to themselves certain inspired persons (inspirations), so that they may leave no use of the external word. But the Scripture doth not suffer any such divorce to be made which joineth the ministry of men with the secret inspiration of the Spirit... Now let those brain-sick fellows be packing, who, under colour of the Spirit, refuse external doctrine.²

Not only individuals but churches grievously err in this matter and Calvin has this in mind when he speaks of 2 Pet.1.19 as a remarkable passage in which we learn

how God guides us. The Papists have ever and anon in their mouth that the Church cannot err. Though the Word is neglected, they yet imagine that it is guided by the Spirit. But Peter, on the contrary, intimates that all are immersed in darkness who do not attend to the light of the Word.

Moreover a divorce of the Spirit from the Word leads not only to aberrations of doctrine and theory but also to gross, unseemly practices such as those committed by the Anabaptists who claim "that they have the Spirit for their guide, and under His agency never err... Away with vain fear! (they say) the Spirit will not bid you do any thing that is wrong, provided you sincerely and boldly leave yourself to His agency".

Who (asks Calvin) is not amazed at such monstrous doctrines? And yet this philosophy is popular with those who, blinded by insane lusts, have thrown off common sense. But what kind of Christ, pray, do they fabricate? What kind of Spirit do they

¹ C. Jn. 14.25.

² C. Acts 16.14.

belch forth? We acknowledge one Christ, and His one Spirit, whom the prophets foretold and the Gospel proclaims as actually manifested, but we hear nothing of this kind respecting Him. The Spirit is not the patron of murder...but the author of love...peace, moderation and truth... To the Christians the Spirit of the Lord is not a turbulent phantom, which they themselves have produced by dreaming, or received ready-made by others; but they religiously seek Him from Scripture where two things are taught concerning Him; first, that He is given to us for sanctification...secondly, that though purged by His sanctification, we are still beset by many vices and much weakness, so long as we are enclosed in the prison of the body.¹ (III.3.14.)

In much the same strain the Reformer speaks of the

fanatics of a similar kind...who call themselves by the plausible title of Libertines or free-men. For they talk most confidently of the Spirit and of spiritual things, as though they roared out from above the clouds and fascinate many by their tricks and wiles... For they treat all things jocosely and scoffingly and though they are great simpletons, yet as they indulge in all vices, they find favour with their own people by a sort of drollery. The state of the case is this, that when the difference between good and evil is removed, everything becomes lawful; and men loosed from all subjection to laws, obey their own lusts.²

Faced with these vagaries, theoretical and practical, Calvin warns and encourages his people, reminding them that

the Spirit of understanding and of regeneration is of force, and shall always be of force, which the Lord coupleth with the external preaching of the Gospel, that He may keep us in reverence of His Word, and may prevent the deadly dotings wherein brain-sick fellows enwrap themselves, whilst that, forsaking the Word, they invent an erroneous and wandering spirit.³

In an admirable chapter in his Institutes, (I.9.), Calvin focusses his thoughts on this whole subject and deals with his

¹ C.f. *infra* re. perfectibility.

² C. 2 Pet. 2.18.

³ C. Acts 10.44.

opponents systematically.

Those who, rejecting Scripture, imagine that they have some peculiar way of penetrating to God, are to be deemed not so much under the influence of error as madness. For certain giddy men have lately appeared, who, while they make a great display of the superiority of the Spirit, reject all reading of the Scriptures themselves, and deride the simplicity of those who only delight in what they call the dead and deadly letter. But I wish they would tell me what spirit it is whose inspiration raises them to such a sublime height that they dare despise the doctrine of Scripture as mean and childish. If they answer that it is the Spirit of Christ, their confidence is exceedingly ridiculous; since they will, I presume, admit that the apostles and other believers in the primitive Church were not illuminated by any other Spirit. None of these thereby learned to despise the word of God... When Isaiah says, 'My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth...', he does not tie down the ancient Church to external doctrine, as he were a mere teacher of elements;¹ he rather shows that, under the reign of Christ, the true and full felicity of the new Church will consist in their being ruled not less by the Word than by the Spirit of God. Hence we infer that these miscreants are guilty of fearful sacrilege in tearing asunder what the prophet joins in indissoluble union... Again, I should like those people to tell me whether they have imbibed any other Spirit than that which Christ promised to His disciples... What kind of Spirit did our Saviour promise to send? One who would not speak of Himself,² but suggest and instil the truths which He Himself had delivered through the Word. Hence the office of the Spirit promised to us, is not to form new and unheard-of revelations, or to coin a new form of doctrine, by which we may be led away from the received doctrine of the Gospel, but to seal on our minds the very doctrine which the gospel recommends.

Hence it is easy to understand that we must give diligent heed both to the reading and hearing of Scripture, if we would obtain any benefit from the Spirit of God... But they say that it is insulting to subject the Spirit, to whom all things are to be

¹ For the Latin, 'ac si elementarius esset', the French has, 'comme s'ils eussent été petits enfants à l'A, B, C;' - as if they were little children at their A, B, C.

² Jn. 16.13.

subject, to the Scripture: as if it were disgraceful to the Holy Spirit to maintain a perfect resemblance throughout, and be in all respects without variation consistent with Himself. True, if He were subjected to...any foreign standard, it might be thought that He was rendered subordinate...but so long as He is compared with Himself...how can it be said that He is thereby injured?... He wishes us to recognize Him by the image which He has stamped on the Scriptures. The author of the Scriptures cannot vary, and change His likeness... The Holy Spirit so cleaves to His own truth, as He has expressed it in Scripture, that He then only exerts and puts forth His strength when the Word is received with due honour and respect... We embrace the Spirit with no danger of delusion when we recognise Him in His image, in His Word. Thus, indeed, it is. God did not produce His word before men for the sake of sudden display, intending to abolish it the moment the Spirit should arrive; but He employed the same Spirit, by whose agency He had administered the Word, to complete His work by the efficacious confirmation of the Word... As they (the children of God) feel that without the Spirit of God they are utterly devoid of the light of truth, so they are not ignorant that the Word is the instrument by which the illumination of the Spirit is dispensed. They know of no other Spirit than the one who dwelt and spake in the apostles - the Spirit by whose oracles they are daily invited to the hearing of the Word.

Neither Baxter nor his fellow-Puritans could advance very much on Calvin as to the content of this passage and, indeed, Baxter seems to have taken a leaf out of the Reformer's notebook when he lays it down that

We must not try the Scriptures by our most spiritual apprehensions, but our apprehensions by the Scriptures: that is, we must prefer the Spirit's inspiring the apostles to indite the Scriptures, before the Spirit's illuminating of us to understand them, or before any present inspirations, the former being the more perfect; because Christ gave the apostles the Spirit to deliver us infallibly His own commands, and to indite a rule for following ages; but He giveth us the Spirit but to understand and use that rule aright. This trying the Spirit by the Scriptures, is not a setting of the Scriptures above the Spirit itself; but it is only a trying of the Spirit by the Spirit; that is, the Spirit's operations in ourselves and his revelations to any pretenders now, by the Spirit's operations in the

apostles, and by their revelations recorded for our use. For they and not we are called the foundations of the church.¹

Accordingly Baxter exhorts: "Interpret Scripture well, and you may interpret the Spirit's motions easily. If any new duty be motioned to you, which Scripture commandeth not, take such motions as not from God: (unless it were by extraordinary, confirmed revelation)."²

It is not easy to ascertain the precise implications of this parenthesis at the end of this passage from Baxter, or to know how much he is conceding. Similarly it is difficult to know what concessions Calvin is making in his letters replying to requests for help in drawing up petitions and confessions of faith and like documents and statements. His injunction to five prisoners of the Gospel is "see that your prudence in answering be in truth in the Spirit of God and not of worldly cunning", and he proceeds to say that "every true believer on seeing it (the petition) will have cause to glorify Him for having dictated it to you by His Holy Spirit".³ At the time of the formulating of the Confession of Faith at the Synod of Paris, 1559, Calvin wrote, "We shall therefore pray God that governing your minds He may demonstrate that His Holy Spirit has presided over the whole transaction."⁴ His letter to the prisoners of Lyons⁵ is particularly striking.

This is why I have not sent you such a confession of faith as our good brother Pelouquin asked for, for

¹ Baxter, Works V. 559. ² Ibid. II. 198.

³ Letters Vol. III. CCCCXIII. ⁴ Letter DXXXIV.

⁵ Letter CCCXVIII.

God will render that which He will enable you to make, according to the measure of mind which He has allotted you, far more profitable than any that might be suggested to you by others... Any change (i.e. in what was already written by them) would but lessen the authority and efficacy which the wisdom and constancy we clearly see to have proceeded from the Spirit of God deserved. Be then assured, that God, who manifests Himself in time of need, and perfects His strength in our weakness, will not leave you unprovided with that which will powerfully magnify His name. Only proceed therein with soberness and reverence, knowing that God will no less accept the sacrifice which you offer Him, according to the measure of ability which you have received from Him, than if you comprehended all the revelations of angels, and that He will make effectual that which He puts into your mouth, as well to confirm His own, as to confound the adversaries.

It must not be thought, however, that these extracts from his letters represent the 'thin end of the wedge', or that they imply, or make room for, a free-lance conception of the Spirit's inspiration. The Reformer makes it abundantly clear, in his detailed examination of the power of the Church and her Councils in regard to doctrine and discipline, that the Spirit is 'annexed to the Word', and any deliberations or decisions or deliverances must be in indubitable accordance with the Word. This must be so because, ideally and actually, "it is the right of Christ to preside over all councils, and not share the honour with any man... He presides only when He governs the whole assembly by His Word and Spirit". (IV.9.1.)

3. Infallibility and Perfectibility

When we come to the last question, namely the one which asks what effect the witness of the Spirit has in the intellectual, practical and evangelical spheres, we realise that we have already had Calvin's answer.

He would deny outright any extravagant claim to contemporary infallibility in the intellectual realm under the Spirit's influence and would equally abhor the claim to perfection or perfectibility in the practical sphere.

He shows that even Paul during the 'extraordinary dispensation' did not presume to be always infallible but humbly indicated the mode of the Spirit's working in him. The

forcing in the Spirit is not taken for a violent and extrinsic impulse as it is called, as those who were called Phoebeades and frantic men were wont to be carried away with devilish madness, but there was more ferventness added unto the wonted inspiration of the Spirit which was in Paul, so that he was moved with new power of God, and yet did he¹ of his own accord follow the Spirit as his guide.

Again he speaks of

the inward force and motion of the Spirit not as though he was out of his wit, but being certified of the will of God, he did meekly follow the direction and instinct of the Spirit even of his own accord... Would to God those brain-sick men, who boast that the Spirit doth indite to them those things which proceed from their own fantasy, did know the Spirit as familiarly as did Paul, who doth, notwithstanding, not say that all his motions and

¹ C. Acts 18.4.

instigations are of the Spirit, but declareth that that (i.e. going bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem) fell out in one thing as a singular thing.¹

"Some people," he says unapprovingly, "think they know all about the secret counsels of God. They speak as though they kept the Holy Ghost up their sleeves." Despite this, however, he says that

the spiritual man, in so far as he is endowed with the Spirit of God, judgeth all things, but is judged by nothing, because he is not subject to any human wisdom or reason. In this way, too, Paul would exempt the consciences of the pious from all decrees, laws and censures of men.²

Here again, of course, no invariable infallibility is implied in all matters of knowledge, and there is certainly no welcome given to antinomianism. He is speaking primarily of matters of faith. Moreover, what he says about 'prophecy' in 1 Cor. 14.32 he would apply to the more general sphere of the Spirit's working.

If any one were furnished with a full revelation, that man would undoubtedly, along with his gift, be above all scrutiny...but as God has distributed His Spirit to every one in a certain measure...there is always something wanting...no one is elevated to such a height...as to have no one to pass judgment upon him.

In the practical sphere, however, Calvin is quite sure that in a very real sense the Spirit guides. As to the mode of guiding - the psychological set-up and machinery of it all - he does not propose to explain; but as to the fact of guidance,

¹ C. Acts 20.22.

² C. 1 Cor. 2.15.

he is perfectly assured that it actually occurs.

It frequently happens (he warns his readers) that they (the contrivances of our enemies) gain an advantage over us, because not attending to their snares, we are not careful to take advice, or rather, trusting to our own wisdom, we do not consider how much we need the government of the Holy Spirit.¹

They...who have not His Spirit to govern their actions, are blind men groping in the dark; that the only proper way is, to be fully assured of our divine calling, and to have always God before our eyes as our guide.²

By far the majority of the references to the Holy Spirit in Calvin's letters have to do with the Spirit's willingness and ability to guide. Hence, time and again, in a variety of ways he expresses his desire for his readers that the Spirit may conduct, lead, guide, direct, govern, rule and guard them.³

With whatever reality or frequency, however, the Spirit may guide a man, it is not to be expected that he will attain perfection of action in this life. This has been underlined sufficiently. Calvin would never countenance the pretentious claims of some of the more extreme Quakers in respect of a remarkable immunity from, or at least a supremacy over, sin, yielding perfection. He is too acutely conscious of the heinousness within and without man of sin, and its opposition to, and the opposition of, the Spirit of grace, to adopt a naïvely optimistic attitude in this respect - but this does not prevent his sounding the trumpet of triumph.

¹ C. Jn. 8.9. ² C. Jn. 11.9.

³ c.f. frequent use of gubernare, gouverner, conduisant, maintenir, garde, cuyder.

Of the evangelical witness on both its Godward and manward side enough has been said in the appropriate context.¹ The assurance of adoption and the gracious prerogative of saying 'Abba, Father' is available to every one who has the Spirit, and Calvin is not outrun by any Puritan or Quaker in this matter. With as much zeal also as any of them he ceaselessly insists on the 'Spirit of sanctification' - the fruit of holiness and the moral outworking of the resources of the Spirit on the human plane must be manifest to all men.

There is one final point to which we must attend, namely the fundamental difference between the Quakers and the Puritans which Dr Nuttall says arises over the Quaker conviction that the Holy Spirit is in every man. To enlarge upon this point here would be redundant, since Calvin's counter-conviction has protruded so prominently in our study of his doctrine of the Spirit. His interpretation of John 1.9 has been seen to run counter completely to the Quaker understanding. The light in every man is by no means the light of regeneration. Similarly the Quaker interpretation of Genesis 3.15 - 'the seed of the woman' by which they understand primarily Christ Himself, and then proceed to say that this 'seed' is in every man, is utterly foreign to Calvin. He explains "the 'seed' to mean the posterity of the woman generally. But since experience teaches that not all the sons of Adam by far, arise as conquerors of the devil, we must necessarily come to one head, that we may find to whom the victory belongs". It is thus only those who are regenerated by Christ through the

¹ Part I, Ch. IV, l.b.iv.

incorruptible seed of the word, who have the victory of the Spirit.

It is alien, therefore, to the whole genius of Calvin to assume that the Spirit is found promiscuously in those who lived before the coming of Christ and in the heathen and sinners of the present time. Such a concession would imply his shelving his fundamental conviction of the objective reality both of sin and the salvation effected in history by Christ. The Holy Spirit, as we have seen, has no mode of working except in terms of the finality of the historical redemption wrought by the death and resurrection of Christ.

Any body of belief, - or unbelief - which underestimates or undermines the objectivity of the content of faith and turns in upon itself, making the claim of subjective authority, not only cannot claim the authority of the Spirit, but is in danger, as Dr Nuttall shows, of being perilously near the heresy of Papal Infallible authority. If Quakerism (and anything which has subsequently had strong affinities with its main tenets) is as thus characterised not unjustly called by the unceremonious title of 'the fag-end of Reformation', it can safely be assumed that Calvin would not hesitate forcibly to throw aside such an unsightly affront to the finished tapestry and harmonious handiwork of the Spirit of God.

PART III.

CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF THE SPIRIT IN RELATION
TO HIS LIFE AND EXPERIENCE.

P A R T I I I

Calvin's doctrine of the Spirit in relation
to his life and experience

"Moreover, I saw in my dream, that as they went on, Faithful, as he chanced to look on one side, saw a man whose name is Talkative, walking at a distance beside them; for in this place there was room enough for them all to walk. He was a tall man, and something more comely at a distance than at hand. To this man Faithful addressed himself in this manner:-

"'Friend, whither away? Are you going to the heavenly country?'

"'I am going to the same place.'

"'That is well: then I hope we may have your good company.'

"'With a very good will will I be your companion. Come on, then, and let us go together, and let us spend our time in discoursing of things that are profitable.'

"'To talk of things that are good, to me is very acceptable, with you or with any other; and I am glad that I have met with those that incline to so good a work... What thing is so pleasant, and what so profitable, as to talk of the things of God?... For instance, if a man doth delight to talk of the history or the mystery of things; or if a man doth love to talk of miracles, wonders, or signs, where shall he find things recorded so delightful, and so sweetly penned, as in the Holy Scripture?'

"'That's true; but to be profited by such things in our

talk should be that which we design.'

"That is it that I said; for to talk of such things is most profitable; for by so doing, a man may get knowledge of many things; as of the vanity of earthly things, and the benefit of things above. Thus, in general, but more particularly by this, a man may learn the necessity of the new birth, the insufficiency of our works, the need of Christ's righteousness, etc. Besides, by this a man may learn, by talk, what it is to repent, to believe, to pray, or the like; by this also a man may learn what are the great promises and consolations of the Gospel, to his own comfort. Further, by this a man may learn to refute false opinions, to vindicate the truth, and also to instruct the ignorant...'

"Well then,' said Faithful, 'what is that one thing that we shall at this time found our discourse upon?'

"What you will. I will talk of things heavenly, or things earthly; things moral, or things evangelical; things sacred, or things profane; things past or things to come; things foreign or things at home; things more essential, or things circumstantial; provided that all be done to our profit.'

"Now did Faithful begin to wonder... Then said Christian... '...go to him, and enter into some serious discourse about the power of religion; and ask him plainly...whether this thing be set up in his heart...'

"Do you experience this...?'

"Then Talkative at first began to blush; but recovering himself, thus he replied: 'You come now to experience, to conscience, and God; and to appeal to Him for justification of what is spoken. This kind of discourse I did not expect; nor

am I disposed to give an answer to such questions, because I count not myself bound thereto, unless you take upon you to be a catechizer, and, though you should so do, yet I may refuse to make you my judge. But I pray, will you tell me why you ask me such questions?'

"'Because I saw you forward to talk, and because I knew not that you had aught else but notion...'. .

"Then did Faithful say.

"'How Talkative at first lifts up his plumes!

How bravely doth he speak! How he presumes

To drive down all before him! But so soon

As Faithful talks of heart-work, like the moon

That's past the full, into the wane he goes.

And so will all, but he that HEART-WORK knows.'"

We have accompanied Calvin along the path of his doctrinal pilgrimage and we have heard him say many and varied things about the Holy Spirit and the manifold truths and experiences which relate to the Spirit. The important question now is, 'What did he know about all this in his own inner life?' If the opportunity were given of presenting a real-life dramatic version of the above recorded scene from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, into which role would we cast John Calvin? Would he play the part of Talkative more naturally than that of Faithful? Have we not heard him say words that would fall much more readily from the lips of Faithful? Who except Faithful would say, "They are convicted therefore of falsely and unjustly pretending a knowledge of Christ, whatever be the volubility and eloquence with which

they can talk of the Gospel. Doctrine is not an affair of the tongue, but of the life; is not apprehended by the intellect and memory merely, like other branches of learning, but is received only when it possesses the whole soul, and finds its seat and habitation in the inmost recesses of the heart?" (III.6.4.) Calvin is neither unskilful nor infrequent in his use of the word 'heart'. He is continually reminding his readers that "faith is the confidence and certainty of the heart..." "What the understanding has received must be planted in the heart..." "The consent of faith is rather a matter of the heart than of the brain, of the affections than of the mind..." "Its root must be in the heart." Who would dare to say that Calvin would blush like Talkative when claiming confidently - "The Inner Master - the Holy Spirit works in our hearts?"¹

Calvin, then, has not only said countless things about the Spirit and about the experience of the Spirit, but has also denounced those who speak of what they do not experience. If he can say all this and yet know little or nothing of it in his heart-experience, then he must rank as a brazen hypocrite of the first order. A variety of uncomplimentary epithets have been flung at this redoubtable Reformer, but even in the copious vocabulary of his adversaries, 'hypocritical' is by no means a favourite.

It must be asked whether Paul Wernle is, in effect, making Calvin out to be somewhat of a 'Talkative' when he claims that

for Calvin, the Holy Spirit represents the mysterious background of his belief in God and of his moral

1. c.f. Calvin's Preface to Psalter.

activity, where God directly works on and in men's hearts, but He does not enter into the consciousness as a present experience. Calvin could scarcely tell of wondrous experiences of the Spirit in certain individual moments, and this sharply distinguished him and his co-workers from the Enthusiasts properly so-called in the Anabaptist camp, or later in the Pietistic circles. They primarily did not 'believe' in the Spirit: they experienced Him and knew themselves moved by Him. Calvin on the other hand 'believes' in Him without experiencing Him directly. Indeed he sometimes speaks of Him as a necessity of thought which explains why some men accept the gospel and others close themselves to it. With this agrees the fact that he speaks of the Spirit in such a correctly Biblical way; he has nothing to say about it from a personal viewpoint. In this sense Calvin was no man of the Spirit (Kein Geistesmensch).

Wernle then goes on to admit that

weaknesses and strength lie quite close together. He was too modest to pride himself on wonderful extraordinary powers and he was mature enough to glorify God in the place where He works upon most men, namely in the powers of trust and brotherly love. Here he felt the secret of religion.¹

There is certainly some truth in the closing phrases of this passage. Calvin is always concerned about the outworking

¹ P. Wernle, Calvin, p. 49. (Wie für Luther und für Zwingli) bildet der heilige Geist auch für Calvin den geheimnisvollen Hintergrund seines Gottesglaubens und seiner sittlichen Betätigung, da Gott unmittelbar an und im Menschenherzen arbeitet; er tritt aber nicht als aktuelles Erlebnis ins Bewusstsein. Von wunderbaren Geisterlebnissen in einzelnen bestimmten Augenblicken wusste Calvin schwedlich zu erzählen; das unterscheidet ihn und seine Mitarbeiter scharf von den eigentlichen Enthusiasten im Täuferlager oder später in den pietistischen Kreisen. Die (glaubten) nicht erst an den Geist, sie erfuhren ihn und wussten sich von ihm getrieben; Calvin dagegen (glaubt) an ihn, ohne dass er ihn direkt erfährt, ja zuweilen redet er von ihm als von einer Denknöthwendigkeit, die erklärt, warum die einen Menschen das Evangelium aufnehmen, die andern sich ihm verschliessen. Damit hängt es zusammen, dass er so korrekt biblisch vom Geist redet, aus dem Persönlichen hat er nichts darüber zu sagen. In diesem Sinn war Calvin kein Geistesmensch, allein es liegen hier Schwäche und Stärke ganz nahe beisammen. Er war zu bescheiden, um sich wunderbarer ausserordentlicher Kräfte /

of the inward experience, but surely the inner experience must be presupposed and cannot be dispensed with. The flower does not bloom without the stem and root and the resources of the soil. We do grave injustice to the Reformer if we attribute to him merely a notional knowledge rather than a direct vital experience of the Spirit; or if, further, we say that he was merely obliged to postulate the Spirit as the only peg on which he could hang his doctrines; or if, worst of all, we say that he merely identified his own mind, thoughts or self with the Spirit. If we bring these presuppositions to our reading of Calvin, we are simply precluding a real understanding of him, and are obliged to drain his writings of their rich meaning and vivacity. If, on the other hand, we allow the words that he uses in connection with the Spirit, to retain their generally accepted meaning, it need not be said of us that 'there are none so blind as those who will not see'. Let us mark the words 'receive', 'possessing', 'led', 'guidance', 'witness', 'feel', 'dwelling', 'endued', 'having', 'presence', in the following passage in which Calvin makes the experience of the Holy Spirit the essence of Christianity.

But, they say, it is rash and presumptuous to pretend to an undoubted knowledge of the divine will. I would grant this, did we hold that we were able to subject the incomprehensible counsel of God to our feeble intellect. But when we simply say with Paul, 'We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the

1 (contd. from previous page)

Kräfte zu rühmen, und er war reif genug, um Gott da zu verehren, wo er an den meisten Menschen arbeitet, in den Kräften des Vertrauens und der Bruderliebe. Hier empfand er das Geheimnis der Religion.

things that are freely given to us of God,¹ what can they oppose to this, without offering insult to the Spirit of God? But if it is sacrilege to charge the revelation which He has given us with falsehood, or uncertainty, or ambiguity, how can we be wrong in maintaining its certainty? But they still exclaim, that there is great temerity in our presuming to glory in possessing the Spirit of God. Who could believe that these men, who desire to be thought the masters of the world, could be so stupid as to err so grossly in the very first principles of religion? To me, indeed, it would be incredible, did not their own writings make it manifest. Paul declares that those only are the sons of God who are led by His Spirit;² these men would have those who are the sons of God to be led by their own, and void of the divine Spirit. He tells us that we call God our Father in terms dictated by the Spirit, who alone bears witness with our Spirit that we are the sons of God;³ they, though they forbid us not to invoke God, withdraw the Spirit, by whose guidance He is duly invoked. He declares that those only are the servants of Christ who are led by the Spirit of Christ;⁴ they imagine a Christianity which has no need of the Spirit of Christ. He holds out the hope of a blessed resurrection to those only who feel His Spirit dwelling in them;⁵ they imagine hope when there is no such feeling. But perhaps they will say, that they deny not the necessity of being endued with the Spirit, but only hold it to be the part of modesty and humility not to recognise it. What, then, does Paul mean, when he says to the Corinthians, 'Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?'⁶ John, moreover, says, 'Hereby we know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He hath given us.'⁷ And what else is it than to bring the promises of Christ into doubt, when we would be deemed servants of Christ without having His Spirit, whom He declared that He would pour out on all His people?⁸ What! do we not insult the Holy Spirit, when we separate faith, which is His peculiar work, from Himself? These being the first rudiments of religion, it is the most wretched blindness to charge Christians with arrogance, for presuming to glory in the presence of the Holy Spirit; a glorying without which Christianity itself does not exist. The

¹ 1 Cor. 2.12.

² Rom. 8.14.

³ Rom. 8.16.

⁴ Rom. 8.9.

⁵ Rom. 8.11.

⁶ 2 Cor. 13.5.

⁷ 1 John 3.24.

⁸ Isa. 44.3.

example of these men illustrates the truth of our Saviour's declaration, that His Spirit 'the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you'.¹ (III.2.39.)

We might easily have underlined many more phrases in the foregoing passage and commented upon them all. Let it suffice merely to put the question, What can they possibly mean to Calvin except what they are on the face of them? It is frankly artificial to say that he knows nothing about receiving, possessing, feeling, being led and indwelt by, the Spirit. In so many places he expresses surprise and indignation that people are unwilling to allow his claims about his experience of the Spirit.

Strange (he says²) that we are accused of arrogance by the adversaries of the gospel, because we dare to avow that the Spirit of Christ dwells in us... Men...not only vaunt that they are Christians without God's Spirit but also ridicule the faith of others.

Some may object that there is no profusion in Calvin of such catch-words as 'openings', 'leadings', and waitings 'till I felt freedom from the Lord', with the precise nuance given to them by Fox and his fellow-quakers. But is not this to indulge in the doubtful luxury of a 'petitio principii'? Is it not a case of begging the question, if we first inflate the Quaker jargon to the full and then naïvely proceed to deflate Calvin's terminology, and go on to say that because he does not use their precise vocabulary, even the faintest of their experiences are foreign to him?

¹ John 14.17.

² C. Rom. 8.9.

It is admittedly true that in respect of his experiences of the Spirit (as in so many other contexts) he is not given to much autobiography, in the sense of employing the first person singular. There are a number of reasons for this reticence on his part. Sufficient has been said about the orgiastic vagaries to which the Anabaptists tended in their unhealthy and illegitimate claims about the Spirit. Calvin felt that he had to swing the pendulum to the other extreme and he was thus obliged to be excessively circumspect in his own counter-claims.

Moreover, as we have seen, it is his continual aim to lay a stabilising stress on the objectivity of the gospel and of Christian experience as over against any dangers of an undue subjectivism. Furthermore he was in the good company of Paul in being (in Wernle's words) "too modest to pride himself on wonderful extraordinary powers". The coveted virtue of humility was by no means denied him, and despite the intricate and enriching volume of experiences which characterised his life he can speak of "the small measure of experience which I have had by the conflicts with which the Lord has exercised me".¹ Again in commenting on Paul's 'visions and revelations of the Lord,'² he says

The more excellent the graces by which any one of us is distinguished, so much the less ought he to think of his own excellence... The graces conferred by God are indeed to be acknowledged, that we may be aroused, -- first, to gratitude for them, and secondly to the

¹ Preface to Commentary on Psalms.

² 2 Cor. 12.1.1ff.

right improvement of them; but to take occasion from them to boast - that is what cannot be done without great danger... For he (Paul) means that God dealt with him in such a way, that he did not himself understand the manner of it. Nor should this appear to us incredible, inasmuch as He sometimes manifests Himself to us in such a way that the manner of His doing so is, nevertheless, hid from our view.

In much contrast to what others might say of him, his own description of himself is that he is "by nature somewhat shy and timid". More than this, however, one of his cardinal principles is that man is nothing in himself and must not allow the spotlight to be played on him. His life is an incarnate abhorrence of any idolizing or idealizing of man and he would flee from the gallery of 'religious heroes', 'saints', 'spiritual geniuses' or 'holy' men, crying (as he often interjected during his preaching from the pulpit of St. Pierre) "Soli Deo Gloria".

The broad pattern of his prolific life and work are well known, but it will be profitable to mention some of the events preceding his conversion and to note some of his subsequent experiences. This is desirable and, indeed, necessary, especially in the light of the stress he himself laid on the integral connection between the Spirit and the providential arrangement of the affairs of men both as individuals and as communities. In the last analysis no detail of his life was outwith the Spirit's jurisdiction, but everything contributed, under God, to what he was.

Into a 'country fertile in warriors and in servants of God' - Picardy in France, John Calvin was born on July 10, 1509. The unpretentious yet dignified and distinctive little

cathedral city of Noyon had the privilege of welcoming into this world the future champion of the Gospel. Here his parents, Gérard and Jeanne Calvin, lived in fairly comfortable circumstances. Unfortunately John and his brothers were early deprived of their mother's care; she died, leaving behind her an almost legendary scent of piety and beauty. Gérard's ambition for his sons impelled him to direct their education with zeal. John underwent his early training in the school popularly known as the "Capettes", and at this time made the intimate acquaintance of the noble families of Montmor and Genlis, whose friendship elicited and enhanced his natural attractive qualities and cultivated his social manners.

Gérard Calvin, although a layman, was closely attached to the ecclesiastical work of Noyon and saw to it that Calvin was possessed of benefices in the Cathedral before he was twelve years old. This involved no actual ecclesiastical duties, but the canopy of Papacy was already over him. In 1523 began Calvin's university-college meanderings. His father's original intention was to prepare Calvin for the Church, and with this in mind he sent him to Paris. There at the Collège de la Marche he was instructed in Arts and came under the pious influence of Mathurin Cordier whose interest in his pupil extended beyond that of teaching Latin, to his moral, and probably, religious welfare. For more specific theological training he then crossed to the staunch Romanist Collège de Montaigu. Here he rapidly advanced in his study of philosophy and dialectics and laid the foundations for what could have been a scintillating humanistic career. It was during his

stay here from 1524-28 that he made the valuable acquaintance of Pierre Robert Olivétan, and possibly the Cops - especially Nicolas. His religious interest at this time was not nil but his moralistic fibre was certainly developing. Although his more lax associates might find him censoring their vices it is wrong to say that he was nicknamed the "Accusative Case". The many and cherished friendships which he made here give the lie to this.

For a variety of reasons, one of which was frankly that it was the 'surest road to wealth and honours', his father, in 1528, decided that Calvin should forsake the study of theology for that of the law. Calvin was not particularly averse to doing the former, since his recent growing interest in reading the Scriptures (possibly under Olivétan's influence) had issued in an increasing detestation of arid scholasticism. On the other hand he had no special desire to do law. However readily or reluctantly, he yielded to his father's wishes and was soon in the free university of Orleans, to study under the brilliant lawyer Pierre l'Estoile. It was here also that he was initiated into Greek literature and more advanced humanistic studies by Melchior Wolmar. The following year found him in Bourges where a famous Italian jurist - Andrea Alciati - was attracting many students.

His father's death in May, 1531, meant the removal of the hand that directed him into a legal career and within a month he was at Paris again, earnestly taking up the study of classics. A number of reasons have been submitted for this change, some putting it down to his shyness, others suggesting

his increasing desire to meditate more on religious questions. Whatever his motives, he applied himself with unabated zeal to his studies, and in the following year his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew seemed to have been arrived at after a meteoric course. It was in April, 1532, that his erudite Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia was published. Its emphasis was moral and social rather than religious. A letter bearing the date September 4th, (but not mentioning the year - which, according to some, was 1532) addressed to Bucer, refers to a French refugee who "could no longer bow the neck to that voluntary bondage which even yet we bear", is somewhat revelatory of his thoughts at the time. During the next months, however, he was more and more drawn into Protestant circles. At Orleans he became Proctor for the 'Picardy nation' at the university. There was a considerable amount of evangelical preaching in the vicinity, and his friendship with Roussel and with others who had Reformed sympathies contributed to the momentum which his convictions had gained by the time of Nicolas Cop's Rectorial Address on November 1st, 1533.

Whether Calvin actually composed, or helped in the composition of, this address, cannot be conclusively ascertained. It is certain, however, that he was thoroughly informed about it, - more than probably discussed it with his friend Cop, and was in complete agreement with its sentiments. This fact is of singular significance, because the nature of the address (in which Calvin thus acquiesced) reveals that a radical transformation had taken place in this brilliant young

man since he had shown the world that he was enamoured of Seneca's De Clementia and kindred classics. Our comparison of the two works need not be very detailed in order to indicate that sometime between the publication of the humanistic study on April 4th, 1532, and the delivery of his friends' rectorial address on November 1st, 1533, the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit had been at work in the heart of John Calvin. The comfortable, clever and cultured humanist had become the Christian convert.

The young commentator on Seneca's "Treatise on Clemency" is sincerely interested in ethical values and in their being observed in a social context. Ruler and ruled alike must respect the moral law and the former must exercise and exhibit clemency and justice. Men must not be impervious to the needs and affections of others, and a Stoic stolidity and insensitivity insults the warmth of human life. "Our religion" - by which, in a cursory manner, he refers to Christianity, teaches man to respect his neighbour and to promote his welfare. There are only three quotations from Scripture and none of these are given in their religious or theological setting. It can hardly be denied that John Calvin the energetic moralist is alive, hale and hearty, - John Calvin the Christian is as yet unborn of the Spirit of God.

Then we turn, however, to listen to Cop's address, we find ourselves in a completely different atmosphere. It is quite evident that Calvin and Cop had acquainted themselves with the healthy, liberating message of the New Testament, with the preface to the third edition of the Greek New Testament

prepared by Erasmus, and with a sermon on the Beatitudes by Luther. In the introductory part of the address the speaker eulogises the gospel which he designates "Christian Philosophy" (the idiom of Erasmus), showing how it presents God's redemptive action whereby He brings men into a reconciled relation of sonship with Himself. A new and higher knowledge accompanies the remission of sins. It is through the Holy Spirit that the new sanctifying experience is given to believers, and by Him they are advanced in the happiness of Christian living. In the second part, the relation between Law and Gospel, grace and faith, is discussed, on the pattern of Luther's sermon. The discourse concludes with a special exhortation to believers, bravely and confidently to meet opposition, armed with the Sword of the Spirit - the Sword of the Word rather than the sword of the world.

There is really no need to marshal any arguments to show that a Calvin who could sincerely subscribe to such convictions as these voiced by Cop, was a resolutely converted Calvin. When, however, the question is asked - What was the precise nature and date of his conversion? the answers are well nigh legion. It is the paucity rather than the profusion of data that accounts for this. As to the information to be gleaned from the Reformer's own writings, the investigator is confined to two contexts (and some scholars would confine him to one). The 'locus classicus' is his preface to his commentary on the psalms (written as late as 1557) and it is necessary to quote it 'in extenso'. He is conscious of his kinship and fellowship with David in his experiences of suffering and success,

and he writes:-

My condition, no doubt, is much inferior to his, and it is unnecessary for me to stay to show this. But as he was taken from the sheepfold, and elevated to the rank of supreme authority, so God having taken me from my originally obscure and humble condition, has reckoned me worthy of being invested with the honourable office of a preacher and minister of the gospel. When I was as yet a young child, my father had intended me for the study of theology. But afterwards, when he considered that the legal profession commonly raised those who followed it to wealth, this prospect suddenly induced him to change his purpose. That was the reason why I was withdrawn from the study of Philosophy, and why I was set to learning Law. Though I forced myself to engage faithfully in it in order to obey my father, God finally made me turn about in another direction by His secret providence. And first, since I was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so deep an abyss of mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame, which was more hardened in such matters than might have been expected from one at my early period of life. Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true godliness, I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that although I did not altogether leave off other studies, I yet pursued them with less ardour.

I was quite surprised to find that before a year had elapsed, all who had any desire after purer doctrine were continually coming to me to learn, although I myself was as yet but a mere novice and tyro. Being of a somewhat shy and timid nature, which led me always to love the shade and retirement, I then began to seek some secluded corner where I might be withdrawn from the public view; but so far from being able to accomplish the object of my desire, all my retreats were like public schools. In short, whilst my one great object was to live in seclusion without being known, God so led me about through different turnings and changes, that He never permitted me to rest in any place, until, in spite of my natural disposition, He brought me forth to public notice. Leaving my native country, France, I in fact retired into Germany, expressly for the purpose of being able there to enjoy in some obscure corner the repose which I had always desired, and which had been so long denied me.

The second main source of data is Calvin's renowned Reply

to Cardinal Jacopo Sadoletto (1539). The Romanist had painted a dramatic picture of a Catholic and a Protestant appearing before God for judgment on their several standpoints. Needless to say, the Protestant had come in for severe treatment. Calvin in his response to this challenge depicts two Protestants - a minister and a layman, ably defending their cause. This 'Reply' does not purport to be strictly autobiographical but it is so graphic, true to life, and consonant with the whole of Calvin's teaching, and vibrant with living meaning, that it is not in the least difficult to believe that Calvin is here speaking out of the fulness of his heart and culling details from his own first-hand experience.

The words put into the minister's mouth are:-

They charged me with two of the worst of crimes, - heresy and schism. And the heresy was that I dared to protest against dogmas which they received. But what could I have done? I heard from Thy mouth that there was no other light of truth which could direct our souls into the way of life than that which was kindled by Thy Word. I heard that whatever human minds of themselves conceive concerning Thy Majesty, the worship of Thy Deity, and the mysteries of Thy religion, was vanity. I heard that their introducing into the Church instead of Thy Word, doctrines sprung from the human brain, was sacrilegious presumption. But when I turned my eyes towards men, I saw very different principles prevailing. Those who were regarded as the leaders of faith neither understood Thy Word, nor greatly cared for it. They only drove the unhappy people to and fro with strange doctrines and...fabricated to themselves many useless frivolities, as a means of procuring Thy favour, and on these they so plumed themselves that, in comparison with them, they almost condemned the standard of true righteousness which Thy law recommended - to such a degree that human desires after usurping the ascendancy, derogated, if not from the belief, at least from the authority, of Thy precepts therein contained. That I might perceive these things, Thou, O Lord, didst shine upon me with the brightness of Thy Spirit; that I might comprehend how impious and noxious they were,

Thou didst bear before me the torch of Thy Word;
that I might abominate them as they deserved, Thou
didst stimulate my soul.

Williston Walker¹ holds that the words put on the layman's lips, reflect less than those quoted above, Calvin's personal struggles. His reason is that "some of its touches, especially regarding the Bible, reflect the experience of the 'common man of the people' rather than that natural to an inquisitive student at Paris and Orleans". Walker forgets that he has previously² drawn attention to the fact that Calvin regarded himself very much as 'a man of the people' and had so styled himself in his dedication to Claude of Genlis of his commentary to Seneca's De Clementia. He was such not only in rank and station but also in experience, and could, throughout his life, enter in to the vicissitudes of the common people. The layman's words then, are not alien to Calvin when he is represented as saying:-

When, however, I had performed all these things (i.e. confession, good works and similar Romish paraphernalia), though I had some intervals of quiet, I was still far off from true peace of conscience; for whenever I descended into myself, or raised my mind to Thee, extreme terror seized me - terror which no expiations nor satisfactions could cure. And the more closely I examined myself, the sharper the stings with which my conscience was pricked, so that the only solace that was left to me was to delude myself by obliviousness. Still, as nothing better offered, I continued the course which I had begun, when lo, a very different form of doctrine started up, not one which led us away from the Christian profession, but one which brought it back to 'its fountain-head, and, as it were, clearing away the dross, restored it to its original purity. Offended by the novelty, I lent an unwilling ear, and at first, I confess, strenuously and passionately resisted;

¹ J. Calvin, p. 74.

² Op. cit. p. 28.

for (such is the firmness or effrontery with which it is natural to men to persist in the course which they have once undertaken) it was with the greatest difficulty that I was induced to confess that I had all my life long been in ignorance and error. One thing, in particular, made me averse to those new teachers - namely, reverence for the Church. But when I opened my ears, and allowed myself to be taught, I perceived that this fear of derogating from the majesty of the Church was groundless. For they reminded me how great the difference is between schism from the Church and studying to correct the faults by which the Church herself was contaminated.

These two texts from Calvin's hands, when studied side by side with as many historical data as can be mustered from other sources, accommodate us with material with which at least a tentative reconstruction of the framework of his conversion can be made. Bearing in mind what has already been suggested as having been in Calvin's own mind, namely the over-all interest and direction of the Spirit in his life, both in a general and particular respect, the most likely date and nature of his conversion must be considered.

As to the time of its occurrence it is probably much easier to say when it did not happen, or had not happened, than to state dogmatically when it actually took place. The above documentary evidence states clearly that it was both sudden and climactic. It was followed by such a real and rapid growth in piety that others attached themselves to him to be taught by him. His fervid interest in the humanistic study of the classics became conspicuous by its pronounced diminution, if not by its absence. Not long afterwards he sought quiet in Germany. These data make it highly improbable, if not impossible, that his conversion occurred

before the publication of his humanistic Commentary on the De Clementia, or that it was a long drawn out affair since 1528 (as Doumergue and others hold) or before his busy period as a student at Orleans where he was not at liberty to take a respite. All this, coupled with the references already made to his share or influential interest in Cop's Address, incline us to the view already mentioned, that the conversion occurred some time between April 4th, 1532, and November 1st, 1533. It is difficult to know the precise nature of his convictions when he attended the service at the Cathedral Chapter on August 23rd, 1533, - whether he was converted by this time but had not openly renounced Catholicism. His convictions and his evident identification of himself with Reformed sentiments are certainly clearer in a letter he wrote to his friend, François Daniel, about two months later on October 27th. Since it can be pointed out that even in Cop's address no formal break with the Church need be inferred, it is too hazardous a step to take to say that the date of the conversion lies between August 23rd and October 27th, 1533. We simply cannot dogmatize.¹

To mark out these chronological termini, however, at the alpha and omega of a period of about nineteen months, does not in the least deny that there were many antecedents ranging themselves over a period of about five years, since 1528 and, indeed, spanning his whole life up to this time. Similarly the term 'sudden' which features in his confession, does not preclude the 'provenient grace of the Spirit' which had long

¹ For a discussion of the various theories see Williston Walker, *op. cit.* pp. 79-90.

been operative. As in the case of the great Apostle to the Gentiles with whom he has many affinities, there were in Calvin's life many goads against which he had kicked. These were found in the immediate sphere of his family and in the circle of his friends; they came from the direction of the more general setting of his contemporary situation; and, more particularly, they were active in the realm of his own inner experience.

It is quite possible that the effect of his early home background can be exaggerated, but it is equally dangerous to underestimate the influence, at least in its negative features, of the atmosphere created by the relation in which Gérard and Charles Calvin (Calvin's father and brother) stood to the ecclesiastical set-up at Noyon, during the future Reformer's formative years. It is beside the point to say that their troubles were pecuniary rather than religious. The very unreality and a-religiousness of an environment which might be expected to be quite otherwise, would undoubtedly have some effect on an observant and sensitive boy like Calvin. Then as he left his home for the college sphere, the influence upon him of such teachers as Mathurin Cordier, may have been slight, but not negligible. Again, although such scholars as August Lang¹ dispute the pressure that Olivétan could have put on Calvin, it is highly probable that evangelical problems were not absent from their intimate conversations. This young friend of Calvin's could well have directed his attention to Luther's treatises on the Lord's Supper which, although their

¹ Die Belehrung Johannes Calvins, Leipzig, 1897.

approach and substance repelled him, must have set him thinking.¹ Wolmar is a link in the chain if only by providing the key with which Calvin could open the Greek Testament. His enlarging circle of friends whose Reformed sentiments were crystallizing - François Daniel and Duchemin, the Cops, Le Fèvre, Roussel, Marguerite d'Angoulême and de la Forge, were all conscious or unconscious instruments of the Spirit.

Moreover, they all played their part against a background whose scenery was assuming an increasingly lurid colour on one side, while on the other, now fainter, now clearer, rays of light streamed in. On the one hand, the ecclesiastical abuses and corruptions of the Church were exceedingly rife and the ghastly spectacles of the martyrdoms were being multiplied. On the other hand, concomitantly with the martyr fires, flames of liberating Reform were being steadily fanned.

Of paramount significance, however, were the 'alarums within' in the 'microcosmic' drama of Calvin's inner life. Here the Holy Spirit was at work. He was made acutely conscious of his sinfulness and guilt, and his introspection followed by a performance of sacramental rites, by 'rationalisation' and by 'repression', produced no salve for his conscience. His stubbornness of heart, allied to, and nurtured by, his ingrained and implicit faith in an authoritative Church, rather than in a living Spirit operative within him, seemed to render him beyond redemption. It was at this point that the cataclysmic event which he refers to as his 'sudden conversion' took place. To it he could look back and

¹

C.f. 2nd Reply to Westphal, Opera IX. 51.

describe it in the words of the 'Protestant layman' - "Thou, O Lord, didst shine upon me with the brightness of Thy Spirit... Thou didst stimulate my soul." Of one thing he is absolutely certain - his conversion was due to a sovereign act of God. It was the Spirit of God alone who could have broken down the opposition in his heart. Post Tenebras Lux!

Commentators on Calvin's conversion have been tireless in their application of 'hat-box psychology' categories. Lefranc¹ describes it in terms of the intellect - "Calvin's decisive conversion was above all a question of logic and reflection, in which sentiment had no part." Lecoultre in turn is quite convinced that

it is neither a conversion of intellect, nor a conversion of feeling, but a conversion of will. It did not give him conviction regarding Protestant dogmas, - that he possessed already; it did not inspire in him a warm interest for the things of the kingdom of God, - he was already filled with it: it made vital an arrested resolution to conform his conduct scrupulously to his convictions, and to break all connection with the errors which he had already abjured in the depths of his heart.²

Lang³ is surely nearer the mark when he says that

it is inconceivable...that a man of iron will and strenuous conscientiousness, as Calvin always was, could have remained for years intellectually convinced of the truths of Protestantism and yet not subject his action to his conviction, as Lefranc and Lecoultre would have it. His was no mere conversion of the will. Calvin's own statements that he 'was obstinately addicted to the superstitions

¹ Jeunesse, p. 97.

² Revue de theologie et de philosophie, Lausanne, 1890, pp. 5-30.

³ Op. cit.

of the papacy', and that his 'heart was over-much hardened', show that both intellect and will were active in the transformation. As soon as his understanding was convinced, the newly-won knowledge must almost of itself arouse the will to eager activity.¹

The Holy Spirit worked upon him in a more dynamic and composite manner than that suggested by any 'piece-meal', 'instalment' theories. He was addressed as a thinking, feeling and willing personality. There were certainly intellectual, emotional and volitional aspects to this conversion. He had arrived at the end of the road along which he had searched for truth and for the true religion and was at the beginning of a never ending journey in the possession of that truth. There was also the culmination of that quest for peace of heart and conscience - for salvation. The call to new action was present, rich in its implications. The Spirit spoke to him as a living whole. Immediately he received some taste and knowledge of true piety and was forthwith inflamed with so great a desire to reap benefit from it that, although he did not at all abandon other studies, he devoted himself to them more indifferently. New desires and a new zeal began to consume him. The Spirit was setting him free.

All this, however, was not allowed to proceed in any nebulous manner. From the outset, he, in his experience of the Spirit, was anchored to the Word of God. "Testimonium Spiritus Sancti Interium" was no empty theological formula for him but what constituted a living, vibrant experience. The

¹ J. Walker, op. cit., pp. 86, 87.

sword of the Spirit had penetrated into the vitals of his personality but now he held it by the hilt and was soon skilfully wielding it to the spiritual blessing of many of his associates, and to his own great astonishment. The Spirit of truth was taking of the things of Christ and gradually revealing them to him, and through him to others.

He would be the last to claim that he had suddenly become perfect or had had a complete system of theological truth deposited with him or that his course of practical action, especially in regard to the Papacy, had been given him in the form of a 'blue-print' which he slavishly and successfully worked out immediately. Indeed it was not till May, 1534, that he was enlightened to make (what Lecoultre describes as) the sacrifice - 'the first external evidence of this conversion', namely, of resigning all his ecclesiastical benefices at Noyon. What is beyond doubt is that after this conversion he never looked back, and became increasingly conscious that his life was in the hand of the Spirit of God, to whose power he could attribute all that was enriching in his life and whose directions he could invoke at all times.

This rubicon in his life thus made a radical difference to his spiritual experience and henceforth he receives more and more of the resources of the Spirit. He can look back to this crucial event and can interpret the subsequent experiences which befell him in the light of this first-hand, experimental knowledge of the Spirit. There need be no remotely academic note in his voice when he speaks of the "efficiency of the Spirit which we experience for our salvation -

as many of us as have been regenerated by His grace".¹ His heart acquiesces in the "simple statement that we must be born again, in order that we may be the children of God, and that the Holy Spirit is the Author of this second birth."² Comparing his life in the Spirit with that of others, he can say

The same thing do we also experience daily in ourselves. He reproveth us by His Word; He threateneth and terrifieth us; He addeth also light correction, and prepareth us divers ways unto subjection. But all these helps shall never cause any man to bring forth good fruit, unless the Spirit of God do mollify his heart within.³

One of his morning prayers⁴ is typical of, and epitomises, his sense of dependence on the Spirit, - "As Thou dost illumine this world by the splendour of Thy sun to further the business of life, so enlighten my mind by the illumination of Thy Spirit and guide me through Him in the way of righteousness." Moreover he knows that triumphant preaching can only follow victorious living in the Spirit and confesses that "It were better for him (the preacher) to break his neck going up into the pulpit, if he does not take pains to be the first to follow God."⁵ In administering and partaking of the Sacrament he recognises that he is confronted by a mystery of the Spirit beyond his comprehension but he is nevertheless convinced of the reality conveyed to him by the same Spirit. "I will not be ashamed," he says, "to confess that it (the mode

¹ C. 2 Cor. 3.17.

² C. Jn. 3.5.

³ C. Acts 9.6.

⁴ Appended to the Genevan Catechism.

⁵ Opera XXVI, p. 304.

in which our Lord is present in the Sacrament) is too high a mystery for my mind to comprehend or my words to express; and, to speak more plainly, I rather feel or experience it (experior) than understand it." (IV.17.32.)

It is only in the Spirit that, for him "Christian life is always and everywhere a life in the presence of God, a walking before His face, - coram ipso ambulare, ac Si essemus sub ejus oculis".¹ He can speak of those deep and precious times when the Spirit of God searches the heart and enables him to commune with God and engage in meditation and a healthy introspection. "In solitude we can give to any subject a closer attention; and farther, the sense of shame does not then hinder a man from thinking without disguise of his own faults...let...each man enter into himself and commune with his own heart."² He knows also what it is to bask in the light of God's countenance.

This light (he says) is said to be lifted up, when, shining in our hearts, it produces trust and hope. It would not be enough for us to be beloved by God, unless the sense of this love came home to our hearts; but, shining upon them by the Holy Spirit, He cheers us with true and solid joy.³

He speaks from his heart in saying⁴ "Now we know, that to be free from all fear and from the torment and vexation of care, is a blessing to be desired above all other things." So also when he writes

this pleaseth me better that they (the disciples) were filled with joy; because the grace of the Holy Spirit reigned in them, who alone doth so make us

¹ C. Isaiah 23.12.

² C. Ps. 4.4.

³ Ibid. verse 6.

⁴ Ibid. verse 8.

glad, truly and perfectly, that we are carried up above the whole world... And assuredly if our faith shall be well grounded in God, and shall be thoroughly rooted in His Word; and, finally, if it shall be well fortified with the aid of the Spirit as it ought, it shall nourish peace and joy spiritual in our minds, though all the world be in an uproar.¹

Although some would cite incidents in his life which give them the lie, yet his sentiments are his own, (and are often worked out in his life) when he says that

When a man not only keeps himself from revenging the injuries which he has received, but endeavours to overcome evil by doing good, he manifests one of the graces of a renewed and sanctified nature, and in this way proves himself to be one of the children of God; for such meekness proceeds only from the Spirit of adoption.²

He is probably justifying what he is convinced is his own Spirit-directed and inflamed conduct when he points out that

As we are too dainty and too much besotted with the love of our own rest, so we be also sometimes angry with the best and most excellent servants of Christ, if we think that through their vehemency the wicked are pricked forward to do hurt; and by this means we do injury to the Spirit of God, whose force and speech kindleth all that flame.³

When we come to consider Calvin's more personal characteristics and tastes, we might be led to expect, from the adverse estimates of some of his adversaries, that his doctrine of the 'common graces of the Spirit' and of the Spirit's attachment to the realms of Truth, Goodness and Beauty in the larger sense, however true to life in others, was gain-said by all that he himself was and did. This is certainly not the case, as is evidenced by references in his writings to

¹ C. Acts 15.52.

² C. Ps. 7.3.

³ C. Acts 9.31.

beauty, music and the liberal arts and the daily delights of life in food and clothing.

Has the Lord (he asks) adorned flowers with all the beauty which spontaneously presents itself to the eye, and the sweet odour which delights the sense of smell, and shall it be unlawful for us to enjoy that beauty and this odour? What? Has He not so distinguished colours as to make some more agreeable than others? Has He not given qualities to gold and silver, ivory and marble, thereby rendering them precious above other metals or stones? In short, has He not given many things a value without having any necessary use? Have done, then, with that inhuman philosophy which...cannot be realised without depriving man of all his senses, and reducing him to a block. (III.10.2,3.)

His verdict in his section on Christian Liberty in the first edition of his 'Institutes' is: "Nor is it anywhere forbidden to laugh, or to enjoy food, or to add new possessions to old and ancestral property, or to be delighted with musical harmonies," and elsewhere he says, "We know by experience that music has a secret, and almost incredible power to move hearts." His caution in regard to the use of any music tending to levity in the psalm-singing which he sponsored and encouraged, was judicious in the light of the frivolities to which the people were then all too prone. This latter fact, moreover, accounts for many of the austerities of which he is accused.

His letters in their tone and content often reveal most intriguing facets of his personality, and explode the fiction that his soul was like that of an ogre shut up in his citadel from which was excluded even the spirit of humanity, not to speak of the Spirit of God. These delightful elements are what would be expected from one who made such claims for the

power of the Spirit and His interest in men. In no wise was it conscious condescension on his part to undertake, in the midst of his multiple duties, what were nothing short of the tasks of a matrimonial bureau! He could be a veritable 'match-maker' as also a competent 'domestic agency' through which his friends found household help. His love for children and especially his welcome for those who were privileged to be his guests at table were well-nigh proverbial. "Your hospitality is known over Europe" was the comment of one friend, and another friend - Spina - could afford to be lavish in his compliments when he wrote to Calvin:¹

I opened my heart to my companion, for I was absolutely set on seeing you. We arranged our route accordingly, and the sight of your countenance held my eyes as long as my companions would allow. Your conversation, though it was short, increased my love for you. I seemed to find some mysterious secret in your words and your discourses. My desire to see you sometimes reaches even to agony. It began at the moment when you said farewell to me, and my heart will never be at rest till God has united you to me in eternal friendship.

Are we to seek the cause of the "mysterious secret" in his words and discourses merely in some power of his human personality, or in the light of his belief in the Spirit, are we not justified in assuming here the active presence of that Spirit? The sympathy, encouragement and counsel which breathe through his letters to those suffering bereavement and innumerable other testings, are of richer quality than the 'milk of human kindness'. In all his affairs he is characterised by an utter disinterestedness; this is evidenced partly by his frugality and by his lack of wealth, revealed

¹ Opera. XII. 455.

especially after his decease.

His sense of his God-given duty has probably never been surpassed, and to attribute this to anything less than the energy of the Spirit of God and his consciousness of Him, is, in the last analysis, to label him as a rank egotist. The truth of the matter is that when he proposed, God disposed and by the Spirit inclined him to take lines of action for which he felt utterly inadequate of himself, and yet could not evade on any account. The Spirit used Farel to convey to him the divine call to work at Geneva. He later described that crucial encounter thus: "Farel kept me at Geneva not so much by advice and entreaty as by a dreadful adjuration, as if God had stretched forth His hand upon me from on high to arrest me."¹ The divine imperative alone enabled him to start there, and when after his banishment he was recalled, his undisguised confession was that he would prefer to submit to "a hundred other deaths than that cross" (namely of returning to Geneva). Similarly Farel was told in a letter which he received in October, 1540, that no bond would have held him there so long, save that he did not dare throw off the yoke of the calling which he knew had been laid upon him by God.

It was in a letter to Farel, dated October 24th, 1540, that the words occur which have been so graphically embodied in the emblem which he adopted - a flaming heart in an open hand. "Know then," he tells Farel, "the disposition in which I find myself. If I were free I would not yield to your desire. But recognising that I do not belong to myself, I

¹ Preface to Commentary on Psalms, Opera XXXI.26.

offer my heart in sacrifice to the Lord, and stripping myself of my own inclination, deliver myself up as a captive into the hands of God."

There were numerous incidents such as the one which involved Pierre Ameaux, who spoke of the Reformer in derogatory terms as being only a Picard, a disseminator of wrong teaching and an unworthy character. These could have been taken merely as attacks on his own person. It is quite obvious, however, that Calvin so identified himself with his message in his office of interpreting the Word of God, and so equated his duty and the will of God, that he assumed that any assault on him was ipso facto a deliberate slander of "the honour of Christ". He believed that the Spirit of Truth was leading him into the knowledge of the Truth through the Word and that His office was to glorify Christ. To disparage the Word was thus virtually to blaspheme Christ. These commendable elements when allied to less worthy elements arising from the pressure proceeding from less enlightened quarters, could lead, and actually (as in the case of Servetus) did lead, to most regrettable tragedies.

Calvin's life was fraught with trials which few men of his calibre have been obliged to face, and to speak of the Spirit in a doctrinaire fashion in his company would be an affront even to common sense. When he says "If at any time the Lord let loose the bridle to the wicked to trouble us, let the inward consolation of the Spirit be sufficient for us," he has no need to think in terms of hypothetical cases but rather of stark, present facts. His confidence and courage at all times

is derived from the Spirit.

True, the world will rage against you; some will mock, and others will curse your doctrine; but none of their attacks will be so violent as to shake the firmness of your faith, when the Holy Spirit shall have been given to you to establish you by His testimony. And, indeed, when the world rages on all sides, our only protection is that the truth of God, sealed by the Holy Spirit on our hearts, despises and defies all that is in the world; for, if it were subject to the opinions of men, our faith would be overwhelmed a hundred times in a day... This single Witness powerfully drives away, scatters, and overturns, all that the world rears up to obscure or crush the truth of God. All who are endued with this Spirit are so far from being in danger of falling into despondency on account of the hatred or contempt of the world, that every one of them will obtain a glorious victory over the whole world.¹

Furthermore, not only was he attacked theologically and ecclesiastically, morally and socially, and even on occasions physically, by his external enemies, but the citadel of his own body was invaded by a host of diseases. An inventory of his complaints conveys the impression that he could well be a one-man practice for a medical practitioner. Racking stomach disorders, sickness, headaches, bile, ague, ulcers, gout, rheumatism, fever, haemorrhoids and tubercular trouble, all conspired (together with an unfortunate fiery temper) to militate against him. In face of all this, his intellectual and practical output is almost miraculous. Colladon² says that before it became a sheer impossibility

He preached every day of each alternate week; he lectured three times each week on theology; he was at the Consistory on the appointed day, and spoke all the remonstrances; what he added at the Conference on the Scriptures every Friday which we call the Congregation...was equal to a lecture;

¹ C. Ju. 15.26.

² Opera XXI. p. 66.

he was not neglectful in the visitation of the sick, in special remonstrances, and in other innumerable concerns having to do with the ordinary exercise of his ministry.

Colladon makes no mention here of his prolific literary output - his 'Institutes' and their re-editing, his commentaries, tracts and letters whose composition, in company with the performance of so much else, almost compels the admission of a power at work in him which was not his own, - nothing, or no One less than the Spirit of God.

Yet, in what must have been a most touching scene at his bedside, when the home-call was in the near-distance he could say with a Spirit-wrought modesty and sincerity -

All that I have done is of no value...and I am a wretched sinner. But, if I may say so, I have meant well, my faults have always displeased me and the root of the fear of God has been in my heart. As for my doctrine, I have taught faithfully and God has given me the power to write. I have done it as well as I could and I have not, as far as I know, corrupted or twisted any passage of Scripture... I have always set before me faithfully what I have thought to be for the glory of God.

The estimates of Calvin's person and character have by no means been uniform; the pens of admirers and antagonists have written in very opposite strains. The latter have clung on to, and have magnified out of all proportion, certain tragic incidents in which the Reformer, admittedly, had an inglorious share. His supporters and intimate acquaintances, (of which there were not a few) while readily recognising, as he himself recognised, his failings, claim a more real knowledge of him and of the undoubted spirituality of his personality.

Painting on a rather large canvas, De Pauley¹ claims that

In Calvin, Augustinian theology may suffer from hardening of the arteries; but the fervent heat of the Alexandrian tradition still continues to throb within it. And when Whichcote speaks of an empty soul made full by the good things of God in Christ, he is repeating a confession often uttered in the 'Institutes'.

From our reading of Calvin we would incline to say more specifically, "the fervent heat of the Spirit of God" rather than "the Alexandrian tradition".

More appropriately, Reinhold Seeberg,² describing the Reformer, is persuaded that "this humanistically trained Frenchman was above all an evangelical Christian, and his whole world-view in the end was determined by his evangelical spirit". His 'evangelical spirit' was certainly not self-manufactured but was the evidence of the Spirit's presence within him.

The tributes to him as an inspired interpreter of the Word of God, where, if anywhere, an experience of the Spirit is indispensable, have not been hyperbolical. Mackinnon³ in referring to his acumen and purpose, by saying that "his commentaries which are impregnated with his personal piety as well as his dogmatic conviction were intended not only to increase an exact knowledge of the Scriptures, but to further the individual and communal religious life", is asserting

¹ The Candle of the Lord, p. 231.

² Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, IV. 2. p. 558.

³ Calvin and the Reformation, p. 286.

important truths. Dean Farrar¹ more enthusiastically acclaims him as "one of the greatest interpreters of Scripture who ever lived". This is because of his vigorous intellect, dauntless spirit, thorough knowledge of human nature, his rich and strange spiritual experience, and his growing sense of the grandeur of the divine. We heartily accord with Arthur Golding in his 'Epistle Dedicatory', prefixed to his, the original, English Translation (1571) of Calvin's celebrated Commentary on the Psalms, which he places second only to the Institutes. This work, which itself is a commentary on spiritual experience, bears the laurels

both for varietie of matter, substantialness of doctrine, depth of iudgement, and perfectnesse of penning. For it is not puffed vp with vaine sound of emptie woords, nor with Rhetorical inlarging of painted sentences, but it is stuffed with piththy and grounded matter, such as plainly sheweth him to haue bin a man indued with the Spirite of God, and also well practized and tryed in the affaires and troubles of this world.

It has been well said that if we wish to know a man's faults we should go to his friend; he knows, but he will not tell us. Beza had the inestimable privilege of being a friend of Calvin's and also his successor, but he is prepared to testify realistically to his friend's defects and qualities. Of Calvin, he says in his biography,

He was by nature of a choleric temperament, and this failing was intensified by the very laborious kind of life which he led. Nevertheless the Spirit of God had taught him to moderate his anger so that no one ever heard him speak a word unworthy of a good man. Still less did he allow himself to go

¹ History of Interpretation, pp. 242 ff.

beyond the bounds of moderation or prudence, unless, indeed, when the question concerned religion, or when he was engaged in bending the¹ opposition of those who inflexibly resisted him.

Mackinnon again² believes that "the secret of his power lies in the fact that he united strength of character with a powerful mind and will and with depth and tenacity of religious conviction". And when Walker³ says that in him "the spirit was master of the flesh and of the mind" we can well ask whether it would not be correct to say that Calvin would claim that the Spirit was the Master who gave and maintained any 'religious convictions' which he had and any victory he enjoyed.

It may⁴ be a perverse thing to say (admits A.M. Hunter⁴) but Calvin, accounted among the princes of systematic theology, was not primarily a theologian, one whose nature found its chief and deepest satisfaction in constructing an edifice of theological doctrine. He was not of the race of the dry-as-dust schoolmen. What was distinctive about him was that he was first and foremost a profoundly religious man. Piety was the keynote of his character. He was a God-possessed man (we could say Spirit-possessed)... As evidence of what was deepest in Calvin might be adduced the fact that in the first edition of the Instituted dogma, pur et simple, plays a minor part, the emphasis being on the things which go to nourish the spiritual and moral life.

And further⁵

Whatever Calvin was or was not, he was a man to whom religion was the very breath of life. His piety was as profound as it was constant. All that was best, noblest and most influential in him (Renan calls him the most Christian man of his

¹ Opera XXI. 169 ff. ² Op. cit. p. 289.

³ W. Walker, John Calvin, p. 442.

⁴ The Teaching of Calvin, p. 291.

⁵ Ibid. p. 4.

generation) is traceable to its true source in a heart that was wholly given to God. Never has a more genuinely consecrated life been lived than his.

In our appeal to the testimony borne by others to his character, we cannot afford to neglect the following comprehensive description.¹

Timidity, nay, even pusillanimity was one of the most striking features in the natural character of Calvin. He wanted courage as a man, to face and encounter the commonest danger, while, as a Christian, he was prepared to meet the violent assaults of the most powerful emperors and monarchs, and to smile with the most composed complacency at the grim countenance of the king of terrors in his most horrid forms... He placed no confidence in himself, but depended upon the protection, and guidance, and strength of the arm of Omnipotence. He knew that his own power was nothing; but relying upon the promises of unchanging Truth and infinite Love, no dominion, however great, - no opposition, however violent made him shirk from his Christian duty, or in any instance either to deny or recant the truth. He rested safe and secure under the panoply of the Lord of Hosts, whether threatened by the blasts of the Pope and his minions, or attacked in Geneva by the vilest and most unprincipled of men. His religious and moral courage - the gift of the Holy Spirit - never forsook him.

Friend, follower and foe, then, must unite in respectful, if not in fervent, acknowledgment of the calibre and transparency of this man who looked to the Spirit of God. We must have done with those who in puerile fashion and foolishly say that they could never love a man like Calvin nor his God; they have not accounted for the fourfold fact that Calvin himself was loved by his God and loved Him in response, and that he both loved others and was himself loved by them. Our heart is drawn out towards him who with his whole soul says "Cor meum

¹ Appendix to Gibson's translation of Beza's life of Calvin, pp. 99, 100.

tibi offero Domine, prompte et sincere". "My heart I offer to Thee, Lord, eagerly and sincerely." And again when with steady voice he says, "Cor meum velut mactatum Deo in sacrificium offero." "I offer to God my heart as if slain for a sacrifice," we can almost see the Holy Spirit descending in sacrificial flame on the altar to ratify his covenant.

As he prescribed their engraving or stamping on edifice, coin and standard in Geneva, so the Holy Spirit emblazoned in indelible characters of fire on his own spirit the letters I.H.S. It was to Jesus, the Lord of his life that, by the Spirit, he sought to bear living witness. He is now in the glorious company of that John who, filled with the Holy Ghost from birth, found it his supreme joy to point to Him who alone could baptize with the Holy Spirit. Neither will he feel embarrassed in the company of that other John who could be a 'son of thunder' but who, listening to the heart-beats of his Master, heard the promise of the coming of the Comforter.

John Calvin, - we salute him as the Theologian of the Holy Spirit, remembering that 'it is the heart that maketh the theologian'. It is arrestingly symbolic that at the Father's good pleasure, he entered into the eternal presence of his Lord Jesus Christ on the evening of Saturday, May 27th, 1564, that is, during the week immediately following Pentecost Sunday.

C O N C L U S I O N .

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CALVIN'S DOCTRINE
OF THE SPIRIT FOR TODAY.

CONCLUSION: The significance of Calvin's doctrine
of the Spirit for today.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The Spirit has much to say through the thought, life and work of John Calvin to, and through, the Churches; directly to individuals within them, indirectly to those without. In our survey of his comprehensive and thoroughgoing doctrine we have realised that there are no major, and hardly any minor, aspects of theology which he can discuss without explicit reference to, and dependence upon, the Spirit of God. His doctrine of the Holy Spirit integrates his entire theology. In this he is constrained not only by the necessity of thought but by the pulsating and ineluctable logic of life and experience, so that the Spirit is never relegated to the incidentals or the periphery of faith. That in which he excels may well excite some to a healthy emulation of his knowledge of the Spirit: that in which he is deficient may urge others to seek higher heights than his, and to attain to a yet purer atmosphere of the Spirit. The beacons which the Spirit lit through him may well serve as warnings to those who tread too lightly along dangerous pathways; and at the same time they may inspire into virile and confident action those whose horizons are extended and whose zeal is directed to conquer new territories through and for the Spirit.

It is important then, to listen to what he has to say in this modern age, first, to the world of thought, which forms a basic and embracing framework to experience and

action; secondly, to the realm of experience, more particularly that of individual Christians and Churches; and thirdly, to the sphere of action, the repercussions of thought and experience on a cosmic plane.

1. By his lucid, scriptural discussion of the nature of the Holy Spirit and the character of His work in the context of general revelation, Calvin steers clear of the dangers of, and suggests the correct attitude towards, two extremes of modern religious thought - Immanentism and Transcendentalism. His description of the Spirit as One, Self-subsisting Person who is distinct from the Father and the Son, and who through His attributes of Deity, is distinct from all created things, whether animate or inanimate, human or unhuman, is more in the 'Hebrew' tradition of concrete, objective thought than in the 'Greek' tradition whose tendency is towards the de-divinisation of the Spirit. He has no sympathy whatsoever with any attempt at showing a continuity between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit which would make out the latter to be something that lies at the terminus of the development of man's higher rational qualities. The identification of the Spirit with an imaginary 'divine spark' in man is equally abhorrent to him. The human spirit is at best a mere adumbration of the Holy Spirit, but there is no possibility of the one merging or passing in to the other. There is never a co-mingling of the Divine Spirit with the human which results in the former's losing His Holy-Otherness; the sun's rays are not polluted, nor do they lose their

identity in penetrating corrupt bodies. In the light of this, it is obvious that Calvin would regard as utter nonsense so much of modern psychological thought which reduces the Holy Spirit and the whole of Deity to the level of the mere projection and deluded objectification of the human mind and 'spirit'. Although in our conception of the Persons of the Godhead, our thought regarding the Spirit tends more towards the danger of subjectification, Calvin urges us to conceive of Him in as objective a manner as that in which the other two Persons are conceived.

On the other hand, while warning against, and avoiding, an immanentist concept of the Spirit, he is as much averse to the over-emphasis of a transcendentalist concept which would lay too much stress on elements reminiscent of Deism rather than of the more intimate Christian 'philosophy'. He denounces as false and foolish the suggestion that the 'holy spirit' lies dormant in man and the universe and subsequently evolves into the 'Holy Spirit', but he equally opposes the view which makes the Spirit so 'wholly other' and utterly unknowable as to deny His interest in, and connection with, the universe and the territory of unregenerate human life, and, further, tends to empty even the regenerate, spiritual life of intimacy and warmth. For him, the Spirit, while not the Spirit of sanctification is 'in, with and under,' the created universe and human life in a sense which is refused by some other theologians.

He does, however, agree wholeheartedly with the 'transcendentalist' in discountenancing the naïve optimism of humanistic culture and philosophy with their overweening

confidence in the potentialities of the so-called 'inspired' mind of man which is capable of arriving at Truth. Sorokin would find in him an ardent supporter in referring to the 'utter exhaustion of sensate culture - it has nothing more to give'. He would accord considerably with the accent on the 'existential' and 'vertical' operation of the Spirit in His unique illumination of the human mind. He is a merciless expositor of man's impotence arising from the fatal inhibitions of the radical sinfulness of his nature, and he offers not the slightest shred of hope to a mind divorced from the Spirit of God. At the same time, however, he is an avowed antagonist of the false pessimism of his time as of all its progeny in modern times in the form of Nihilism and ^{the} banality of so much contemporary thought. What he does indulge in is what Doumergue (taking up Calvin's opponents' terms) describes as 'eschatological pessimism,' which actually yields the most robust optimism. The realistic confession of humanistic bankruptcy, and the frank admission of the vanity of existence without the ^{life of the Spirit,} produce an attitude to life which is the direct antithesis to nihilistic pessimism. Life lived 'sub specie aeternitatis,' under the canopy of the Spirit, is not the negation of the present life but its enhancing. To live in a 'hemmed-in' world - a world where the majority have their minds supplied and informed only by their, at best, limited senses - as those who see the unseen and know the unknown, is to live as those who have already, in a manner, entered the world of the Eternal Spirit. This life-view is one which enables man to live prospectively in the present as one who is already enjoying eternal blessings whose presence

as it were transposes the key of time into that of eternity, meanwhile making time itself replete with meaning. "As to us," says Calvin, "already in this earthly pilgrimage we know what is the only and perfect felicity, but in such sort that it inflames our hearts daily more and more with desire for it, until we shall be satisfied with its full possession. (III, 25. 2.) Such an attitude of mind belongs to one who lives under the aegis of the promises of God whose eternal fulfilment is 'not yet' but whose reality is conveyed by the Spirit.

Allied to this life-view there is a view of history which is dynamic and rich. At a period in history when the world seems to have reached an intellectual and spiritual impasse and when the claim to an exclusive key to history is made in the name of Dialectical Materialism, it is important to enquire whether there is a counter view which might be described as 'Dialectical Spiritualism.' Calvin, of course, would not for a moment adopt the Hegelian dialectical interpretation of the Trinity, but he believes that in the coming of the Son and the Spirit, God is making use of, and giving meaning to, history. The advent of the Son is an event in history; it is historical, but it is not merely historical. In the Lord Jesus eternity and time are united in a unique, unrepeatable sense and whatever act He did was at one and the same time, and automatically, a historical and a supra-historical, eternal act. His every act, as Son of God, from Birth to Resurrection was done through the Eternal Spirit. Again, Pentecost was a historical event, but there is not the same relation between the believer and the

Spirit as that which obtained between Christ and the Spirit. When Christ spoke it was automatically as if the Father and the Spirit spoke. When the believer speaks, it is quite otherwise; when he speaks or acts there is no unfailing guarantee that the Spirit speaks or acts. The believer must occupy the humble position of waiting upon the Spirit. The Spirit alone can make the eternal-historical Word and act of Christ real and efficacious to and through the believer. The latter, living in history, can, through the Spirit, and only when He acts, know something supra-historical. History, then, is the scene where man has the privilege of waiting on the Spirit, in His freedom, to break through when and where He wills, to make contemporary the eternal-historical coming of Christ. History must wait on the Spirit for its only true synthesis.

2. Against this background must be considered more particularly, the experience of the individual Christian and the Church. Reference must be made to the proximate means whereby the Spirit conveys the living Truth. For Calvin, Scripture holds a cardinal place, but his doctrine of the Spirit provides what he would claim to be a corrective to a number of modern attitudes to Scripture. He may sometimes have given the impression of having fallen short, in actual practice, of his doctrine of the Spirit, but the doctrine itself is certainly a safeguard against what can, in certain circles, degenerate into a 'Spirit-less Fundamentalism.'. By his insistence on the necessity of the Inner Testimony of the Spirit to give the reader the certainty that the Scripture is

the Word of God, and again, by his emphasis on the dire impotence of the reader to understand and interpret the Word apart from the Spirit, he pronounces against the undue exaltation of the isolated 'killing letter' which fails rightly to honour the life-giving Spirit. The literal text of Scripture can have no meaning for, nor power over, the reader apart from the illumination of the Spirit. His doctrine, then, does not commit him to a magical, 'ex opere operato' conception of the Word, by which it is implied that the Spirit is inherent in Scripture.

Nevertheless, on the other hand, he in no way advocates the view that it is the Spirit who confers authority on the Written Word in a crisis of decision in which the reader is confronted by the Truth. His emphasis on the office of the Spirit in the inspiration of Scripture secures the position of the antecedent, permanent, inherent, objective authority of the Word. Due to this unique inspiration by the Spirit the Scriptures are, as such, the Word of God, but their inherent authority is not known by the reader except in the Holy Spirit. The Word is the Word of God in its divine content, but it is only, as it were, by the breath of the Spirit that it is conveyed on the air waves and impinges upon the spirit-ear of the hearer. It is only Scripture that the Spirit takes when He wishes to convey the Word of God, and Calvin does not hesitate to say that this is because of the finality of its inspiration. He refuses to take the easy way out of avoiding comment on the inspiration of the Word through which the Spirit speaks.

If, therefore, he differs from neo-Calvinism and

neo-orthodoxy on this point, he is certainly averse to the tenets of more liberalist circles who subjectivise the Word and the work of the Spirit in more radical ways. He knows of the practical dangers of such an attitude.

Dr. P. T. Forsyth¹ is thinking in line with Calvin's warnings when he writes that:

The Reformers lived with the note of revelation, on a theology of facts; the Anabaptists with the note of inspiration on a theology of consciousness. The one set were apostles, the other prophets. For the one set the Spirit issued from the Word of Gospel, for the other it wandered like the wind and was its own gospel. We shall see that, as the vice of the one was to dry into a hard orthodoxy severed from experience, the vice of the other was to deliquesce into a vagrant experience on whose bogs flitted the enticing fire-drakes of subjective whim. Each is invaluable in its own place and power. The gospel must be a kindling and present experience; but a kindling and present experience is not necessarily the Gospel.... The vice of this detachment of the Spirit from the Word is that it ends by destroying its detachment from the world. Detached from the Word, the supernatural action of the Holy Spirit gradually² becomes the natural evolution of the human spirit".

Whatever his successors may have been guilty of, Calvin himself does not favour an arid orthodoxy. He is adamant on the need for men to have an experience of the contemporaneous work of God's Word and Spirit. In the Spirit the living past must be conjoined to the living present. There can be no secure acquiescence in old truths; the Word must come as an experience of something vibrantly new. 'Hearing' and 'knowing' God is a first-hand experience in which man through

1. Faith, Freedom and The Future", Hodder, 1912, pp 96-97.

2. op. cit. p. 95.

the Spirit is personally confronted. It is only then that man 'hears' God speak.

Linked indissolubly to the importance which Calvin gives to the written Word is the emphasis he lays on the integral relation between the Spirit and the Incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. Much mental and spiritual turmoil in the realm of present experience would be avoided if this emphasis were duly maintained. Many Christians expect an experience of the Spirit subsequent to, and separate from, an experience of Christ, whereas Calvin, in line with Scripture, shows that a richer knowledge of the Spirit cannot be mediated apart from a richer knowledge of Christ. No doctrine of the Spirit is commendable which derogates in the least from the glory of the Person of Christ. Calvin would concur with the balanced treatment of this point given by Thornton in his "The Incarnate Lord"¹. "Both Christ and the Spirit dwell in the Christian soul, but not in the same way. Christ is the indwelling content of the Christian life. He is being 'formed' in us..... Paul nowhere says that the Spirit is formed in us, or that we are to be conformed to the image of the Spirit..... The indwelling of the Spirit involves the indwelling of Christ; consequently the indwelling of Christ is inseparable from the quickening. But the Spirit is never regarded as the 'content' of the quickened life. He is the agent of revelation who brings the content of truth to the spirit of man; and by consequence we have the mind of Christ...

1. "The Incarnate Lord" (London 1928) pp. 332. ff.

The Spirit is the quickening cause; and the indwelling of Christ is the effect of the quickening Christ is the objective ground of salvation; the Spirit is the effective cause of the new life in us."

Following upon this there is in Calvin's doctrine of the Spirit a healthy and liberating accent on 'individualism' on the one hand and on 'fellowship' on the other, and then on 'individualism through fellowship.' There is newness and constructiveness in the comprehensive work of the Spirit in respect of Christ. Dr. Forsyth¹ depicts well the high office of the spirit and the manner and effect of His operations when he says that "The Holy Spirit is associated in the most close and exclusive way with the act of the Son, the action of the Word, and the existence of a Church of new souls. It is given by Christ as His greatest gift; therefore it was the fruit of His greatest act and consummation. It has its source in the cross, and its first action in the Resurrection and its Word. Its prime action therefore is in its nature miraculous; it is not to ethicise, not to sanctify, but first to regenerate, by organising men into Christ's new creation. So that it is not one of Christ's gifts, as the Gospel is not, but the complete and effective gift of Christ Himself as the Saviour of the World brought home to the individual in the communion of God and the community of a Church. So that also, we cannot continue to speak of the Spirit as 'it', but must go on to speak of Him as He enters more deeply the personal life."

1. op. cit. pp12-13.

Calvin is convinced alike of the personal nature of the Spirit's approach and of the fact that it is only in the personal response to the Spirit's confrontation in grace that man attains to true individuality and self-hood. There is no possibility of, and indeed no need for, the by-passing of the individual. The individual must hear the call to him as a responsible self, and in allowing his own sinful spirit to be opened to the Infinite Holy Spirit he will find himself. Calvin would be in the vanguard of the modern evangelistic drive, and as an antidote to any emotional extravagances he would lay unrelenting stress on the need for an uncompromising submission of the will and a handing over of the entire personality to the obedience of the will of God under the direction of the Spirit. The 'Inner Testimony' being an intensely personal experience, it immediately gives the individual an initiative and an incentive and a status in the work of the spiritual kingdom. The humblest believer has eternal vistas opening out before him and the Spirit's testimony is the 'open sesame' to as rich a realm of glory as is offered to the most illustrious. Nevertheless, Calvin is the first to undermine the presumption of any would-be freelance Christian. The resources of the Spirit are, in a manner, canalized in the 'communion of saints', and if the individual is truly to enjoy them, he has to take his place in the 'Pneumatocracy'. The Spirit works upon him in the fellowship of the Church, in its prayers, preaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments. He has his own vital and organic part to play but he will gain his individuality in subserving it to the fellowship. It is as cramped by the

truth of which the fellowship is the custodian, that he will find his liberty; and it is that truth as mediated by the Spirit that will stand him in good stead when not actually within the fellowship (that is, when he is in hostile contexts).

The form of church government favoured by Calvin was intended to allow a considerable degree of elasticity. This elasticity can well admit a liberty of the Spirit. The social framework and level of life which obtained at his time impeded in no small manner the rule of the Spirit and unfortunately dictated an often all-too rigorous and legalistic discipline. There is admittedly a disparity between his doctrine of the Spirit and much that was practised at Geneva. This need not always be the case. Presbyterianism, and certainly Calvinism, need by no means be the tomb of the Spirit. It is unfortunately all too true that there have been, and still are, cases where it has the 'form of godliness but denies the power thereof.' There are still instances of a dead orthodoxy lying prostrate in the valley of dead bones, and many would be insulted at the suggestion that the breath of the Spirit needs to come from the four winds to bring it to life. It was a Calvinist who spoke of the 'expulsive power of a new affection', and the same Spirit is always available to produce it and direct it to course through all the intricate veins of the Calvinistic Churches. Presbyterianism is not alone in possessing elaborate and often highly efficient machinery, but it so often happens that the very elaborateness and efficiency are what lead men to dispense with the Holy Spirit.

Very often, however, it is not a dead orthodoxy that causes the trouble but a live nebulousness. There are not a

few who flee a 'dogmatic orthodoxy' like the plague and frankly admit their incompetence to deal with doctrinal distinctions. Consequently they hide behind the excuse that all is well, provided they apply what they 'sincerely' believe or possess certain 'experiences', and then they readily fling the accusation of 'spiritual pride' at others. Calvin of course will not tolerate the equating of sincerity with truth, and he regards it as the essence of humility to submit to the truth of the Word through the Holy Spirit. Moreover, in sitting lightly to the rule of the Word and Spirit of God, and in adopting professedly broad-minded and large-hearted conceptions of the Holy Spirit's interests, the church can launch into, and engage itself in, the most varied enterprises. There can be untold and needless dissipation of energy, large quantities of it being what Chalmers aptly describes as 'so much animal-heated activity.' The generous and universalistic notions of the Spirit break down the middle wall of partition between sacred and secular in such a way that those within the pale of the church know not how far to go out, and those outside do not see the urgency of coming within. In neglecting its authentic task of preaching repentance, the church leaves the Spirit in a manner unemployed, and merely polishes the veneer of those within and without its walls who believe they are vaguely breathed upon by the Spirit of Goodness, and dangerously continue in their cultured sophistication and sophisticated culture. Paying lip-service to the Spirit and the Word of the Gospel it is incompetent to 'ruffle the perfect manners of the frozen heart' of a certain cross-section of modern society, and on the other hand, it is pitiably limp in the face of the seething mass of grossly sinning mankind. In its desire jealously to maintain its

dignity at all costs, it jeopardizes its chances of being impelled by a living, spiritual dynamic. "Glory to the Church and damnation to enthusiasm" is a slogan which is far from obsolete. The Spirit is an unwelcome disturber of the peace and must be kept in His proper place; He can be discussed and referred to but He must on no account enter in His life-transforming energy. In the light of such an attitude a modern observer might well say "I'd rather have uncouth life than aesthetic death".

Calvin cannot be reprimanded for favouring 'aesthetic death', but his fear of the 'uncouth life' as it broke out in the 'Anabaptist frenzies', in all probability made him hesitant in asking for, or expecting an 'outpouring' of the Spirit. The calling of a meeting for prayer for revival was not the practice in Geneva, and in spite of all his emphasis on the Spirit, there is much point in the judgment that 'the Reformation was not a Pentecost.'

Present day churches salutarily realising their impotence and considerable spiritual bankruptcy, and commendably coming together in an ecumenical spirit must beware of the danger of thinking that by arriving at a lowest common denominator of Christian Truth they are thereby acting according to the mind of the Spirit. Calvin's ecumenicity, he believed, was characterised by a strict adherence to the whole Word of God in obedience to the Spirit. Neither must it be assumed that the very coming together of a number of religious bodies in itself constitutes a living unity in the Spirit. The analogy may be strong and extreme but it is well to be reminded that a number of corpses put together will not produce one living being. It is imperative that the Word of Life should penetrate savingly into each one severally before the unity of the Spirit

be expected and attained. There is no short cut to the spiritual revival of the universal church.

3. The individual and the church are set in no paradisaical environment but are found rather in a context of social and cosmic sin. The challenge to them, and their responsibility, is to translate into concrete action the truths of revelation in the face of their contemporary situation. They are under God's command to do so and under His judgment if they neglect their duty. Their director in these multiple matters and the source of their resources is the Holy Spirit. They are, however, to expect no brand-new revelations for the modern exigencies, but to allow themselves to come under the judgment of the revelation of the Word once given by the Spirit. The Spirit's help comes by way of inspiring a deeper insight into the final revelation already given, a more thorough submission to it and an ever-widening application of it to human life at large. There is a changeless centre of an ever-changing movement. The Spirit fixes immoveably the centre - Jesus Christ of the New Testament - and inspires the movement - the "effort to bring the life of men more and more within the orbit of experience determined by that changeless central truth. Unyielding loyalty to the centre, freedom of action for the loyal soul as it swings in now narrower and now wider circles around that centre - alike are gifts of the Spirit, evidences of the Spirit's control."¹

1. Edwin Lewis. "A philosophy of the Christian Revelation" p.262.

The Church down the ages has made attempts to approximate to this ideal and its gradual success is instanced by such enlightened actions as the abolition of slavery. Calvin, within limits prescribed by his times attempted to bring the manifold life of man within the orbit of the revelation in Christ. His success would have been more patent had he been able to project on to a cosmic screen his doctrine of the Spirit in respect of Christian Liberty. His limited success need not be the standard for any who follow his doctrine but an incentive to surpass his achievements.

The accent of the Church in recent decades has been on social action, and a phrase which is increasingly coming into vogue is 'Christian Action'. Calvin's procedur  in its merits and demerits would suggest that at this time the wisest step would be to underline the first of these two words. It is dangerously easy in pressing emergencies to rush into action based on a diluted and adulterated conception of the term 'Christian'. If the Spirit's help is to be sought - and certainly the Church should not raise a single finger in any situation without turning to Him - it is of paramount importance to remember that He is the Holy Spirit. As Holy Spirit He works only in terms of the Holy Word of God and the Holy, Incarnate perfection of the Will of God in Jesus Christ. As the Eternal Holy Spirit, moreover, He operates in this present age in terms of the age to come-eschatologically. The eternal kingdom of the coming age can not be actually realised in this age nor can the energy and ingenuity of men however devoted, bring it about. It is the Spirit's prerogative alone to work in and through men. The Holy

Spirit's operations thus run completely counter to any materialistic, this-worldly social or political programmes, as well as against any optimistic, merely human attempt gradually to transform, or drastically to revolutionise, prevailing conditions to bring in an ideal state.

In the light of, and over against, modern totalitarian systems, Calvin's system might in, some respects be called spiritual totalitarianism. His, the most comprehensive of world-views, embraces Church and State and the whole of life. The Spirit is directly concerned with and is to rule, every item in the life of the church (Pneumatocracy) and ultimately no element in the life of the state is outwith the jurisdiction of God. Politics and economics, commerce and industry, science and education and the multiform affairs of domestic and social life, have no right to claim independency of the Spirit. Nevertheless, there is no danger of the swallowing up of the individual in the cosmic machine; the Inner Testimony of the Spirit which constitutes man a significant individual in the realm of religious experience, also gives him an individuality in the sphere of 'secular' action. As there is a charismatic dispensing of functions in the ecclesiastical context, so in the state, each man has his appointed post to fill. By his exalting of the conception of the dignity of the common secular 'calling', Calvin virtually bridges the gulf between sacred and secular. Every man can have the Spirit's power to enable him to fulfil his task however menial or imposing it is, since he is there by divine appointment; 'God's work, done in God's way, never lacks God's supply.' It is only as man and his neighbour both attain to their individuality through the Spirit that true community life

is possible. To live in 'society' in a state of 'legal togetherness' is 'natural' (but certainly not easy) to 'this age'; to live in 'community' - in living fellowship - is characteristic of the 'age to come'; this latter is possible only in the Holy Spirit.

It is tragically obvious how far removed mankind is from such a community of the Spirit. What aggravates the diseased condition is the pathetic fact that the masses of humanity seem quite oblivious of the need for such a community and of the need for a radical cure. A cosmic drug malignantly injected into it keeps mankind in a stupor, shut off from spiritual consciousness. On the other hand, increasingly large tracts of the world's population are adopting an aggressive, anti-spirit attitude. Materialism at its worst seems to march along the highway with a buoyant crusading spirit, letting all and sundry hear its confident 'singing note'. It is perfectly clear that an anaemic spiritual experience and an apologetic, defensive Christianity is more than useless in such a cosmic context. A world in which "the best lack all conviction and the worst are all stirred up with passionate intensity" does not show much evidence of subjection to the Spirit of Eternal Truth. He is certainly right who calls upon Christianity at such a time to "proclaim Truth that sings."

The ringing out, however, of a heroic adventurous challenge to men to take to the field and to pit a 'singing-Truth' against falsehood is by no means the answer. It is true that "principle must again bear witness against principle, world-view against world-view, spirit against spirit", but it must be urgently realised as never before that the cosmic conflict is in the

heavenly 'places' - not 'with mere flesh and blood, but with the despotisms, the empires, the forces that control and govern this dark world - the spiritual hosts of evil arrayed against us.' At such a critical impasse men must recognise that the only deliverance lies in the coming of the Holy Spirit to meet and defeat the seemingly invincible Unholy Spirit.

The call is a sober and searching one to the Church of God, and to every individual Christian, to have done with merely dutiously and delicately holding on to traditional sanctities and sanctities, and to ask in unfeigned prayer, the Holy Spirit to come in His heart-rending power to create that humility and that realistic consciousness of sin which was produced in no small measure in Calvin. The way will then be clearer for the same Spirit to lead them on in a 'holy recklessness', their flaming hearts outstretched to their Lord and with humble confidence proclaiming with the Reformer - 'Soli Deo Glória.'

The Holy Spirit to be known in the fulness of His might must be known as the Sovereign Spirit, the Spirit of the Sovereign God. It is as such that Calvin wishes Him to be known. The Sovereignty of God which the Spirit demonstrates is not merely an arbitrary omnipotence which suggests that God has in an absolute form the aggregate of all the powers known to man, and of which in a crisis he feels his dire need. God's Sovereignty is sui generis and is known to man only in the event of God's acting in him by the creative Word and Spirit. "There is a sphere of power which is exclusively the sphere of God's power. Only by thus exclusively reigning can we know that He is really God. This is what tells what sovereignty

signifies. Here is the only omnipotent Lord; once having known Him, He is the One beside Whom man can serve no other Lord."

To know the Spirit as Sovereign is to know Him in His Sovereign Freedom. To offer Him a 'blue-print' and to expect Him to work to human schedule is veritably to engage in blasphemy. The most that men can and need do is to exercise the faith which He Himself produces, to ask and expectantly wait for the coming of the Sovereign Spirit.

¹
Kuyper's lyrical description, written about three-score years ago has a distinctively modern note and is particularly appropriate to our time.

The quickening of life comes not from men:
It is the prerogative of God, and it is due to His Sovereign will alone, whether or not the tide of religious life rise high in one century and run to a low ebb in the next. In the moral world, too, we have at one time, spring, when all is budding and rustling with life, and again, the cold of winter, when every vital stream congeals, and all religious energy is petrified.

Now the period in which we are living at present, is surely at a low ebb religiously.

Unless God send forth His Spirit, there will be no turn, and fearfully rapid will be the descent of the waters. But you remember the Aeolian Harp, which men were wont to place outside their casement, that the breeze might wake its music into life. Until the wind blew, the harp remained silent, while, again even though the wind arose, if the harp did not lie in readiness, a rustling of the breeze might be heard, but not a single note of ethereal music delighted the ear. Now, let Calvinism (We could say Calvin's doctrine of the Spirit) be nothing but such an Aeolian Harp - absolutely powerless, as it is, without the quickening Spirit of God - still we feel it our God-given duty to keep our harp, its strings tuned aright, ready in the window of God's Holy Sion, awaiting the breath of the Spirit."

1. Kuyper. Calvinism. pp. 274-275.

Let the Church say 'Veni Creator Spiritus.'

Then after His coming, to revive His people, let the Spirit and the Bride together say, come. And let him that heareth say, Come..... Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

S Y N O P S I S.

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in John Calvin.

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Place of regenerate reason; always dependent on Spirit - -

Place of regenerate conscience.

Inner Testimony of Spirit; supra-rational, supra-moral, intuitive perception in experience as a whole; certainty. c.f. Goodwin, Sibbes, Hollinworth, Owen.

Simile of Light.

Testing Spirit - reason, conscience, Church?

Limited authority of Church or "communion of saints".

Charismatic principle of "sense of meeting".

Christocentric criterion. Differences between Fox and Calvin.

Chief criterion - Word of God - Scripture.

Holy Spirit - Inspirer of Word.

Witnesses to Word.

Speaks through Word.

Tested by Word.

Word - touchstone of Spirit - not vice versa.

Integral inter-relation of Word and Spirit.

2. Spiritual Revelations.

Finality of Word - unrepeatable circumstances of N.T. dispensation. Special spiritual gifts for early Church. Scripture unique and closed. No

place for subsequent extravagant
"revelations" of individuals or
Churches; dangerous effect on
conduct.

Spirit of regeneration, linked with
Word, only safeguard.

Relation of Spirit to Word

(Institutes, Bk; I. Ch. 9.)

Spirit's present inspirations

(drawing up Confessions etc.)

3) Infallibility and Perfectibility.

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No claim possible to either. Even Paul
cautious in his claims. Presumption
to be avoided.

In practical sphere, Spirit does guide.

Note Calvin's letters. No perfectibil-
ity in this life. Realism regarding
sin and need for grace.

Evangelical witness - Spirit of
adoption. fruit unto holiness.

Holy Spirit in every man? No, not
in pre-Christian unbelievers, heathen
or sinners of present.

Reality of sin and historical
redemption.

PART THREE. Calvin's doctrine of the Spirit in relation 292. to his life and experience.

Bunyan's "Talkative". Similarly Calvin denounces
mere head-knowledge. Use of word "heart." If
Calvin had no heart-experience of what he said
about Spirit - hypocrisy. Kein Geistesmensch?

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Spiritual experience must be presupposed. Makes
definite claims to experience of Spirit. Different
vocabulary; not very autobiographical.

Anti-Anabaptist extravagances and subjectivism.

Humility; shyness; Soli Deo Gloria.

Biographical sketch. Childhood: College life: 301.
Arts, Theology, Law, Classics.

Seneca's De Clementia; Cop's Address.

Conversion - date and nature. 306.

Spirit's prevenient grace; kicking goads.

Associations, contemporary situation, inner conflicts.

Conviction of sin, stubbornness, introspection, rites,
rationalisation. Sudden conversion. Sovereign act
of Holy Spirit.

Nature of conversion - not merely intellectual or 314.
volitional. Dynamic; intellectual and spiritual.

Testimony of Spirit. Word.

Sacrifice of benefices.

Subsequent experience explained in terms of Spirit. Salvation, regeneration, softening of heart, prayer, preaching, sacraments, presence of God, communing, sense of love, trust, hope, courage, joy, meekness, zeal. 316.

Personal characteristics. 319.

Attitude to things - beauty, music, food, clothing. Friends - marriage, match-making, children, hospitality, bereavement.

Disinterestedness; sense of duty; identifies duty with God's will. 322.

Trials - without; theological, ecclesiastical. 323.

Physical suffering. Humility at death.

Estimates of Calvin by scholars - his spirituality emphasised. 325.

Calvin the "Theologian of the Holy Spirit."

Conclusion: The significance of Calvin's doctrine of the Spirit for to-day. 332.

Message to those within and without Church.

Comprehensive doctrine, life and work. Doctrine of Holy Spirit integrates his theology. Forestalled later dangers.

Significance for:

1. World of Thought. 333.

Doctrine of Nature of Holy Spirit.

Anti-Immanentist and Transcendentalist extremes.

- False Optimism and Humanism.

- Pessimism and Nihilism.

"Eschatological Pessimism".

Modern spiritual impasse.

"Dialectical Spiritualism" - over-against Dialectical Materialism.

Eternal-historical nature of Christianity.

2. Realm of experience. 337.

Spirit and Word.

Anti - "Spirit-less Fundamentalism."

- opposers of objective authority of Word.

- liberalist subjectivism.

Contemporary Word and Spirit.

Integral relation of Spirit and Christ - Incarnate Word.

No knowledge of Spirit apart from Christ (and vice versa).

Individualism - personal call; submission of will to God's will. Fellowship. Individualism in Fellowship.

Pneumatocracy.

Presbyterianism; Calvinism; need for Spirit;

form of godliness...dead orthodoxy; live nebulousness;

anti-doctrine; sincerity equated with truth;

dissipation of energy.
 Universalistic conceptions of Spirit;
 Spiritual revival.

3. Sphere of action. Spirit and 'revelations'.
 Insight into contemporary situation.
 Social action; Christian action; Spirit -
Holy Spirit. Spiritual "Totalitarianism";
 individualism; democracy; "community of The
 Spirit; exhilaration of the Spirit.
 Holy Spirit versus Unholy Spirit; Prayer
 for Revival. Sovereign Freedom of Sovereign
 Spirit.
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Remark:

An error in the pagination of the thesis - the duplication of "275" - has been attended to by numbering the second of these pages "275^a".